UNE 20, 2005

The Nation.

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THE CLASH
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URBAN ARCHIPELAGO

PROGRESSIVE CITIES IN A CONSERVATIVE SEA

by JOHN NICHOLS • JOEL ROGERS

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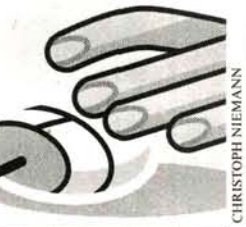
LETTERS

Letters



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

WHERE HAVE YOU GONE PUBLIC RADIO?

Washington, DC

■ In the course of his reporting on National Public Radio ["Good, Gray NPR," May 23], Scott Sherman contacted me to ask about my perceptions of the network, where I have worked for the past year as one of NPR's two managing editors. During our interview, Sherman asked me whether it was true that NPR's vice president of news, Bruce Drake, had blocked any of my journalistic initiatives. I told him—on the record and for use in his article—that, to the contrary, Drake had been 100 percent supportive of my work since I joined the staff and that I considered him a good man and a good journalist. Despite the fact that I provided Sherman with that assessment, he chose to report that NPR sources "anticipate future discord" between Drake and myself.

As a reporter, I believe it's critically important to rely on evidence and experience provided by on-the-record sources rather than the fears and predictions of anonymous critics. If Sherman chose to emphasize the anonymous critics' dire predictions, then as a matter of fundamental fairness he had an obligation to share with his readers my belief that Drake is a talented editor and a highly supportive colleague. I hope this letter will undo some of the damage done by Sherman's unfair description of my relationship with Bruce Drake and the anonymous disparagement of his excellent journalistic skills. BILL MARIMOW

Managing editor, National Public Radio

Joliet, Ill.

■ Scott Sherman takes NPR to task for being too timid to engage in "kick-ass journalism." As a dismayed listener, I would be glad if the network just stopped *kissing* ass so assiduously. Since the churlishly abrupt dismissal of longtime host Bob Edwards, NPR's flagship news program, *Morning Edition*, seems to have abandoned its critical faculties altogether. Tune in, and if you don't hear unquestioning acceptance of Republican spin, paeans to the religious right or a simple-minded sermon disguised as commentary, just wait five minutes.

JOANNE STRILEY

Whitefish, Mont.

■ If NPR is to have relevance and remain solvent, listenership is necessary. If in fact 71 percent of the respondents are not liberal, what's wrong with NPR news the way it is? Here in Montana, I live in a wasteland of media choices. I think the competition among noncommercial distributors is very healthy. Despite NPR's loss of its original bite, it will take a cataclysmic event for it to sink to parity with the commercial pablum. Most of NPR's stories are in-depth and interesting. DAVE FERN

Adair, Okla.

■ Here in conservative Oklahoma, I tend to feel like a lonely petunia in an onion patch. Perhaps NPR *is* less radical than it was, but in my neck of the woods, it's the only source of balanced news and left-leaning editorial. The words of NPR have to be well positioned and artfully chosen to dent the rural Oklahoman consciousness. Does it do the job? All I know is that I hear bits of fact and anecdote repeated that had to have come from the station I listen to. The venom and spittal of AM talk-radio is, frankly, childish and not worth imitating. Cool reason with a dash of wit are better for the long haul. I'm glad NPR has chosen a subtle rather than a "kick-ass" approach to journalism. VIRGINIA HOYT

San Francisco

■ NPR *is* vanilla. But in pointing out how "white" NPR remains, Scott Sherman refers only to Hispanics and blacks. NPR and Sherman should also think of multiracial people, of Asian-Americans, etc. We all listen to the radio, and we feel the need to hear our perspectives on public airwaves. NGUYEN QUI DUC

Washington, DC

■ I have no TV, never have. I am retired—get most of my serious info from *The New York Review of Books*, *The Nation* and the Internet. What I listen to on NPR: the weather, commuter traffic, time, *To the Point* and the opera, when it's on. I am confused and amused by nostalgia for "quirky, spontaneous and risky" reporting. Does "risky" refer to telling truth to power? No fear of that on NPR these days.

JENEFER ELLINGSTON

Waco, Tex.

■ Another source of disappointment in NPR: It seems to lack a copy editor. Reporters frequently misuse or mispronounce words, have banished the objective case of the relative pronoun, confuse *persuade* with *convince*, shift from singular to plural, use unreferenced pronouns, etc. A network that aspires to offer a first-rate alternative to the networks must also offer first-rate English. BRENT M. FROBERG

North Truro, Mass.

■ I must take exception to the complaint about "the NPR drone." Never mind that it is vastly preferable to the false hysteria of commercial stations. The point is, it makes an NPR station easily recognizable if you're surfing the dial. When traveling, I'm always looking for a local NPR station (we can be grateful that NPR is almost everywhere). It takes only a few words to recognize that characteristic sound.

And while it's true that NPR is not a left network, it is perhaps the only network that presents a liberal viewpoint and allows conservatives to offer theirs. MARIAN PRESSLER

SHERMAN REPLIES

Brooklyn, NY

■ I thank readers for their many thoughtful letters about my article. Bill Marimow seems eager to assert that his relationship with his boss, Bruce Drake, is harmonious. Fair enough. But the central issue is this: In recent years, NPR has largely neglected investigative reporting. Top executives at the network insist that Marimow, whom I praised in my article, was hired to change that situation. There is much in Marimow's history to suggest that he is the right man for the job. But there is little in Drake's history to suggest that he is strongly committed to muckraking and risk-taking. Can Marimow take NPR's news coverage beyond the realm of polite, middle-of-the-road reporting and toward something more gutsy, confrontational and memorable? Experienced NPR staffers I spoke with have serious doubts about his ability to do that, owing to inertia at the highest levels of the network. I wish Marimow luck. SCOTT SHERMAN

DEFINITELY ABOVE AVERAGE

Middlesex, NY

■ Thank you for Garrison Keillor's brilliant, insightful "Confessions of a Listener" [May 23] in that particular, unique style of his that is always so artistic, creative, humorous and damning, all at the same time. BILL YOUHASS

Lloydminster, Saskatchewan

■ What a relief to read "Confessions of a Listener." It's great to be reminded that there are good things in the world even though very ugly people are screaming for our attention so much right now. ALICE GRADAUER

Brandon, Fla.

■ Garrison Keillor's piece is extremely amusing, but I take issue with his statement (far too close to dogmatic): "There's nobody so humorless as a devout atheist." As one myself, I have known a great number, and never have I encountered a humorless one. (Didn't I just say I found his article amusing?) How many jokes will a Christian make about the virgin birth? Or a Muslim about the Koran? ABIGAIL ANN MARTIN

Hillsdale, NJ

■ Is Garrison Keillor kidding? Unlike the children of Lake Wobegon, the adults who live in/listen to AM talkradioland *are* below aver-

(Continued on Page 22)

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PRINTED JUNE 1 VOLUME 280, NUMBER 24

IN THIS ISSUE

2 **LETTERS**

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 TORTURE IN THE US GULAG

4 LIES, GUTS & DEEP THROAT
William Greider

5 A WIN FOR EU DEMOCRACY
Gary Younge

5 SPECTACLE
Sith Happens
Richard Goldstein

7 COMIX NATION
Facing It
R.O. Blechman

8 STEM CELL WEDGE?
David Corn

9 AFTER THE BOYCOTT... WHAT?
D.D. Guttenplan

COLUMNS

6 DEADLINE POET
Bolton in Straitjacket...
Calvin Trillin

10 DIARY OF A MAD LAW PROFESSOR
Genetically Speaking
Patricia J. Williams

11 THE LIBERAL MEDIA
In Re *Newsweek*: Which Side Are You On?
Eric Alterman

ARTICLES

13 URBAN ARCHIPELAGO
Progressive cities in a conservative sea.
John Nichols

20 CITIES: THE VITAL CORE
Urban centers spawn progressive politics.
Joel Rogers

BOOKS & THE ARTS

25 TELEVISION: The Power of Nightmares
Peter Bergen

34 FILMS
Howl's Moving Castle
Madagascar
Or (My Treasure)
Human Rights Watch International Film Festival
Stuart Klawans

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Last week's cover art was by José Chicas of Avenging Angels.

EDITORIALS

Torture in the US Gulag

Amnesty International secretary general Irene Khan's scorching description of Guantánamo as "the gulag of our times" has provoked a new White House line: Stories of torture and mistreatment of terror detainees are the fabrications of repatriated ex-prisoners who "hate America" and are trained to lie, as George W. Bush declared at a May 31 press conference.

Up until now the Administration's response to its multifront human-rights scandal has been characterized by the defiant evasions of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales. Now, the line has shifted to outright deception. Fact: If the testimony of ex-prisoners figures significantly in the story, it's because the Administration has persistently blocked human rights investigators' access to current detainees at Bagram, Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib. Fact: AI's report is primarily based not on ex-prisoner interviews but on sources like the Pentagon's own Independent Panel to Review Department of Defense Detention Operations and court-martial testimony.

For three and a half years, AI, Human Rights Watch and other monitoring groups, frustrated by official stonewalling, have maintained a cautious approach to torture allegations. It has taken repeated breaches in the Administration's wall of secrecy—through investigative reporting, the ACLU's FOIA requests and court orders—to document the patterns Amnesty describes. And scarcely a week goes by without further supporting evidence. Just days before Bush's remarks, the *New York Times* detailed cover-ups in the sadistic killings of two prisoners at Bagram. No sooner did *Newsweek*, under Pentagon pressure, retract its Koran-desecration story than reports of Koran desecrations emerged from the Defense Department's own records. Lieut. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez assured the Senate Armed Services Committee that he "never approved" the use of intensive sleep deprivation, guard dogs and excessive noise in interrogations at Abu Ghraib. Now the latest document cache obtained by the ACLU includes a memo over Sanchez's signature, dated September 14, 2003, explicitly approving techniques for "significantly increasing the fear level in a detainee"—including (surprise!) sleep deprivation, noise and "presence of military working dogs."

Bush may find Amnesty's charges "absurd," but the debate has already moved from whether the United States is a purveyor of torture to what to do about it. Slowly, instruments of legality and due process, within and outside the United States, are encircling US policy. In late May the United Nations Commission Against Torture ruled that Sweden violated the Convention Against Torture when it "rendered" asylum-seeker Ahmed Agiza to Egypt on a CIA flight. It is only a matter of time before the commission—to which the US is a signatory—turns to the United States itself. In Britain the Law Lords are preparing to consider whether evidence coerced through torture abroad is admissible in its courts. The same question now shadows Washington: Two doctors who examined American student Abu Ali, awaiting trial for allegedly plotting to assassinate Bush, have concluded that the young man was tortured in Saudi Arabia after his arrest.

Guantánamo's hundreds do not compare with Stalin's millions, but the gulag is a fair analogy—how else to describe an international network of cells and interrogation centers holding prisoners without charge, for indeterminate terms, beyond reach of any court? But Bush's torture system and his obsession with secret executive authority are shaped by the contradictions of democracy: courts that won't cooperate, legislators who ask questions, reporters who drag secrets into the light. Harnessing those forces—whether through Congressional committees, new legal actions or citizen protests—is today's great task.

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COMMENT

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The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2005 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Circulation Dept. or DPGM, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, ON N9A 6J3. **When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions.** Back issues $4 prepaid ($6 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

INTERNET: Selections from the current issue become available Thursday night at www.thenation.com.

Lies, Guts & Deep Throat

In the context of Washington intrigue, W. Mark Felt was heroic in the scale of his clandestine truth-telling, but he was not unique. These transactions by insiders are routine and often motivated by self-interest or political goals. Felt saw himself as wronged, perhaps, in being passed over to succeed J. Edgar Hoover as FBI director, but in addition he saw the institution where he'd spent his career threatened. He knew the White House was acting criminally but probably also knew that these events would never lead to official investigation and prosecution unless—a remote possibility—the public story became much, much bigger and too shocking to bury. He took considerable personal risk to stimulate this. Whatever his motives, that was his gift to the Republic.

So it is ludicrous to imagine that reporters should stop using unnamed sources. In Washington, that's like telling them to stop reporting—stick to the official version (come to think of it, many reporters already do). With experience, the old hands in Washington from business or diplomacy or politics learn to read the newspapers as opaque message boards, and they fill in the blanks of who's leaking and for what purposes. This cuts out the public, to be sure, but resembles the courtiers in any royal government. The king wants it known, so his attendants leak. Sometimes, the king needs to know what his aides are not telling him, so someone else leaks to the press. Of course, if the king himself never reads the newspapers, he remains in the dark, muddled and manipulated by the stronger figures around him. Does that sound familiar?

But the Deep Throat story reminds me primarily of the uniqueness of Woodward and Bernstein. They were *so* young. They made *Washington Post* editor Ben Bradlee nervous. What if these kids are wrong or getting conned by their "sources"? Other editors were less charitable in their skepticism. Yet Bradlee sucked it up and kept them on the story. And Katharine Graham sucked it up and stuck with Bradlee. This remarkable story of human interactions inside an important institution—people taking a conscientious gamble on one another—is what now seems so unique and meaningful to me. Can we imagine these events happening inside government or media today?

Now we know what Bradlee knew (and as a young *Post* reporter I never doubted): The kid reporters had impeccable sources. They were digging and piecing facts together and pulling fragments from some people who were themselves very close to power. Those insiders were revolted by what they saw inside the Nixon Administration—and frightened. So they did the right thing. Then Bob and Carl had the guts and the methodology to find the story, one element after another. Then Bradlee and Graham had the guts to publish it. Quaint as it seems, this is called courage. Their example is the Watergate legacy. It's not surprising that contemporary Washington wishes to devalue it. WILLIAM GREIDER

ON THE WEB: Max Blumenthal uncovers the right-wing network behind the furor over Terri Schiavo. Jeremy Scahill considers new information about US military incursions into the no-fly zones in Iraq during the run-up to war in the summer of 2002 (www.thenation.com).

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COMMENT

A Win for EU Democracy

The French said *non*, the Dutch said *nee*, and despite eighteen other official languages to choose from the Eurocrats were rendered temporarily speechless. The rejection of the European Constitution in late May and early June referendums in France and the Netherlands was the most predictable shock in the history of European integration.

The polls had long forewarned the results. Yet to imagine that two of the European Union's founding members and most loyal devotees would take a torch to the house they themselves had built was more than the Europhiles could bear. There was no plan B.

The Constitution aimed to streamline and cohere all previous EU treaties following the accession of ten new members in 2004 so that the EU could operate more efficiently and talk to the rest of the world with one consistent voice. It would have completed the transition, at a breakneck speed of just over a decade, from a free-trade area of twelve nations similar to the North American Free Trade Agreement to a multinational body of twenty-five countries where millions would share a court of human rights, the same-color passports, an official flag, an official currency and an official anthem (Beethoven's "Ode to Joy").

But it had to be ratified by all member states. By May 29 nine had already done so, although only Spain had taken it to the people in a referendum. With the French and Dutch rejections, it has been temporarily put on ice, its future now uncertain. Along with it in the deep freeze goes the hope of some on the left that the EU might emerge as a more progressive geopolitical bloc that could check or challenge America's global hegemony.

For this setback, however, we should all be thankful. While the aim of pooling the resources of relatively small European nations to challenge more effectively the excesses of US supremacy, including war and rigged markets, is laudable, the undemocratic means by which the EU has chosen to go about it are lamentable.

The only thing more staggering than the pace of European integration over the past fifteen years has been the lack of accountability that has gone with it. Neither the president of the European Commission nor any of the commissioners, who wield most power in the EU, are elected. They are selected in rounds of horse trading by national governments on the basis of political patronage. Indeed, the European Parliament, the only directly elected component of the EU, cannot even initiate legislation. This explains why turnout for EU elections is even lower than for US presidential elections—45.5 percent last year.

There are some good things in the Constitution, which would guarantee shelter, education, collective bargaining for labor and fair working conditions. But a somewhat progressive agenda that has been imposed has less credibility than a reactionary one that has been chosen. The lack of democracy leads ineluctably to a lack of legitimacy. Unable to influence the pace, scale or direction of integration, many Europeans have become alienated from it.

Their despondency, while clearly widespread, found little or no expression in the mainstream electoral politics of either country. In the Netherlands 85 percent of parliamentarians were in favor of a yes vote, along with the employers associations, unions and almost all the newspapers. In France the establishment was similarly aligned. So the victory for the no campaigns reveals a profound dislocation between the political class and the political culture. The margins, in effect, became the mainstream. This posed challenges and opportunities for the left in both countries.

The two principal forces mobilizing the no vote were the far right (including fascists and other assorted nationalists) and the hard left (including Trotskyists, Communists, environmentalists and antiglobalization protesters). The former, which dominated the campaign in the Netherlands, circled the wagons around an ossified and xenophobic sense of nationhood, exploiting fears of open borders, Turkish accession and the threat to national identity. The latter, which had most traction in France, slammed the EU's free-market foundations, which will allow machines to chase the cheapest labor around the continent. The left did not shut the door on the Constitution altogether but argued for a body that would be more relevant, responsive, democratic and worker-friendly with the slogan, "A Different Europe Is Possible."

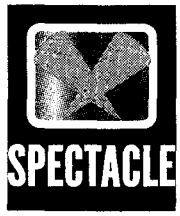
It is precisely with this agenda that the European left should now enter negotiations on the current, uncertain future of European integration. Beyond a slide in the euro and the meltdown in both countries, the effects will be long term. The European Constitution is dead, but the European project will continue.

The desire to forge a more progressive counterbalance to a unipolar world with the United States at the helm is a sound one. But it won't be progressive unless it is built with the consent of those in whose name it has been created. The problem with American power is not that it is American but that, both at home and abroad, it backs the powerful against the weak and supports democracy only when democracy supports America. If Europe wants to confront that it must offer more democracy, not less. By saying no, the French and Dutch certainly slowed the European juggernaut. That was the first crucial step in putting it back on the right track.

GARY YOUNGE

Gary Younge is the New York correspondent for the Guardian.

Sith *Happens*



It's been twenty-eight years since Han Solo and his multimorphic crew set out to destroy the Evil Empire. That was a long time ago in a cineplex far, far away. The original *Star Wars* audience is now nearly old enough to worry about Social Security, and any new episode in the saga has to engage that aging generation as well as its spawn. No wonder *Revenge of the Sith*, the sixth and final installment, is darker and more reflective than what came before. The need to be mature—and "relevant"—may explain why George Lucas chose to make this film so overtly political.

Revenge of the Sith is salted with anti-Bush insinuations, none more telling than the moment when the villainous chancellor, Palpatine, wins sweeping new powers from the galactic senate in the name of security. Watching from her seat, the virtuous Padmé

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COMMENT

observes, "This is how democracy dies: to thunderous applause." It remains to be seen whether this line will join the many maxims *Star Wars* has contributed to American discourse, but it's already stuck to Bill Frist's back, thanks to a media campaign against his war on the filibuster by MoveOn.org. ("One senator, seduced by a dark vision of absolute power, seeks to destroy the fabled order, replacing fair judges with right-wing clones.") Of course, partisans have always tried to latch on to the power of this formative saga, the closest thing in entertainment to Wagner's *Ring* cycle. Many politicians have been dubbed Darth Vader; Henry Kissinger is only the most deserving. But usually Lucas remains *hors de combat*. This time he's waving a blue light-saber and hoping the film "will waken people to the situation." A sincere sentiment? Granted—but also a canny way to make another sequel seem like more than that.

The truly newsworthy thing is not that *Star Wars* has an ideology but how it has changed over the years. The best way to track this evolution is to watch the latest episode alongside the original 1977 feature (now called *A New Hope*). Lucas masterfully played to the retro yearnings of the late 1970s, channeling the feeling of forgotten movie serials and introducing a new emblem of rugged individuality in Han Solo, the free agent with a heart of gold. The 1977 film prefigured the contours of Reaganism in its manichean tropes, right down to its fabled Evil Empire. *Revenge of the Sith* has a very different feeling. Gone are the verities of light and darkness; now complexity rules—or as Obi-Wan Kenobi counsels, "Only the Sith think in absolutes." This isn't just about aging; it's also Lucas's sense of what his audience is thinking now. In Anakin Skywalker, who crosses over to the Darth side, we see how evil can flow from smug naïveté. He is as prophetic an American type as Han Solo once was, and *Sith* offers as striking an image of our anxiety as the original feature did in its time. Let's hope the new film is as predictive of social change.

Still, there's something ill fitting about the liberal platitudes Lucas sprinkles over *Sith*. They clash with the conservative hallmarks of the series as a whole. Consider the galactic government: Even before Palpatine's power play, it was a "democracy" overseen by a clique of spiritual warriors—something like a benign version of Iran. Lucas's cosmic order may be a highly diverse place, with many species mingling over drinks and subtitles, but authority tends to flow upward toward humans—usually male humans. Here is the ideology of *Star Wars* that never changes, and it has less to do with left and right than with the values of machismo. If this saga has an authoritarian streak, that's because macho narratives often do. They are mystifications of hierarchy, and *Star Wars* is one of the best. Take the Jedi. For all their noblesse, they are basically a gang of wand-wielding guys passing power from member to member in a top-down way. As the mini-patriarch Yoda puts it, "Always two there are: a master and an apprentice." Is there a more succinct summation of the way machismo confers and confines clout?

Star Wars has always been a male preoccupation. By now the series holds a sacred place in the temple of dude. Tamper with its codes and there's hell to pay, as Lucas learned in 1999 when he dared to insert an androgynous character into *The Phantom Menace*: the fearless but flouncy Jar Jar Binks. With his West Indian accent and dreadlocks, he seemed like a shuffling black man to some brothers, but white boys simply saw him as gay—and the Internet exploded with cries of "Jar Jar must die!" Apparently Lucas learned his lesson, since everyone—or -thing—in his current galaxy is saber straight (though some fans detect a touch of the queer-brush in C-3PO). But the memory of that fey moment lingers on, informing Bill Frist's response to being compared to Palpatine. Through a spokesperson, he proclaimed that Howard Dean is Jar Jar Binks—a Republican way of saying *faggot*.

Revenge of the Sith doesn't just recapitulate this sexist structure; it's the most reactionary film in the *Star Wars* series when it comes to gender. In the 1977 feature Luke Skywalker's sister, Leia, was a fighting babe. In 2005 Leia's mother, Padmé, is a helpmeet to her husband, Anakin—all the more striking since she's a former queen who saw action in an earlier episode. How fitting that she dies of a broken heart when her man becomes a Sith-ophant. Back in the *Alien* days, when a female astronaut named Ripley was slaying slimy monsters, Padmé would have looked laughably retrograde. Today she seems like a proper heroine—and critics are so taken with the idea that a blockbuster disses the President that they overlook its sexual politics.

CALVIN TRILLIN

White House Says Bolton Can Continue To Do the Job Even While in Straitjacket

(Another Headline in the Future of John Bolton as American Ambassador to the United Nations)

Twelve delegates were there but couldn't swear
Just why John Bolton chose to throw the chair,
Or why his face turned orange, then turned red,
Then turned a sort of Dubonnet instead.
They couldn't guess just why it might have been
That spittle came to cascade down his chin.
They couldn't say precisely what he shouted.
Interpreters who testified all doubted
The words were from a language that they knew—
Although they'd all decided to skidoo,
And so they couldn't say they'd been around
When guards pinned Bolton, screaming, to the ground.
So even now it's not been ascertained
Why Bolton flipped and had to be restrained.
The White House had no comment on the trigger,
But said John Bolton pleads our case with vigor.

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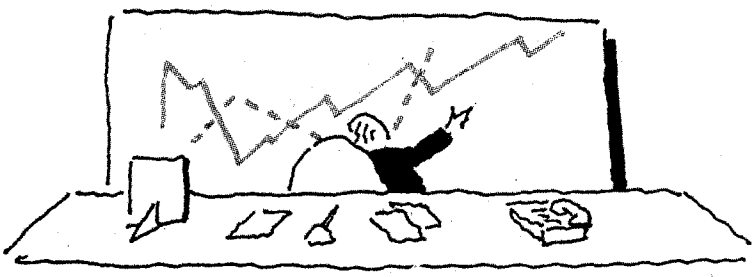
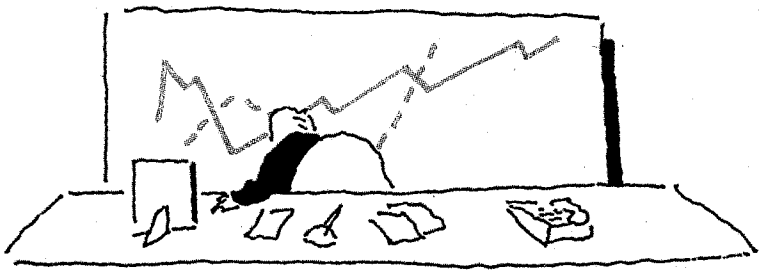
COMIX NATION

FACING IT

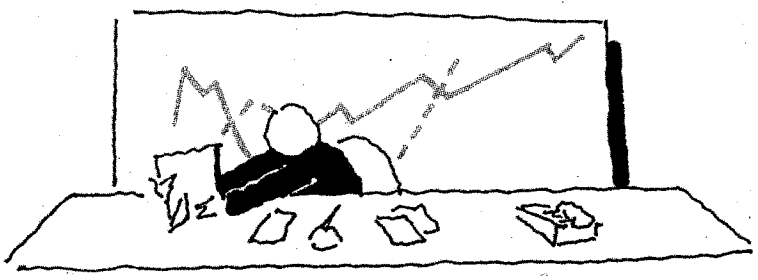
R. O. Blechman



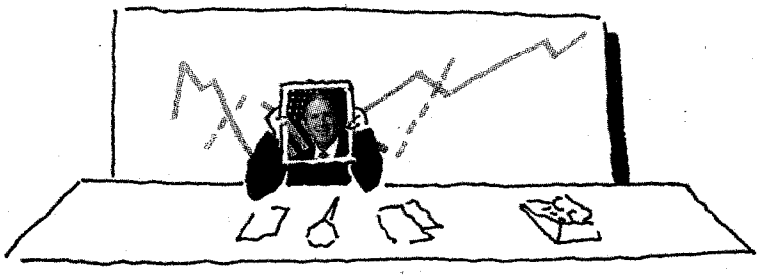
I'm real tired of hearing that because we're a big corporation ...



... we don't have a face.



Sure we have a face, and let me tell you ...



... it's one you can't beat.

R.O. Blechman most recently designed Arianna Huffington's online blog site, "The Huffington Post."

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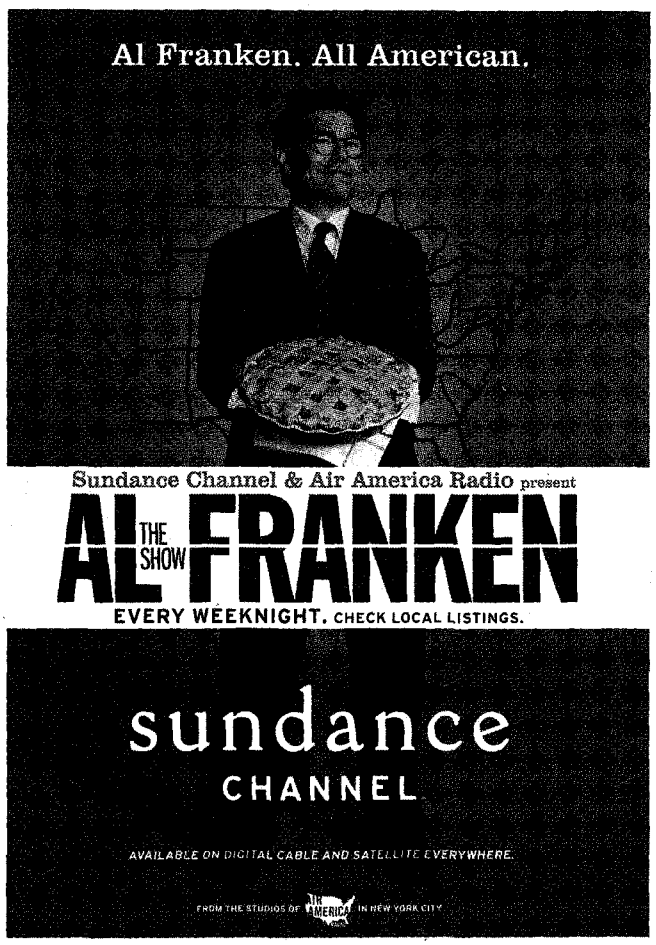
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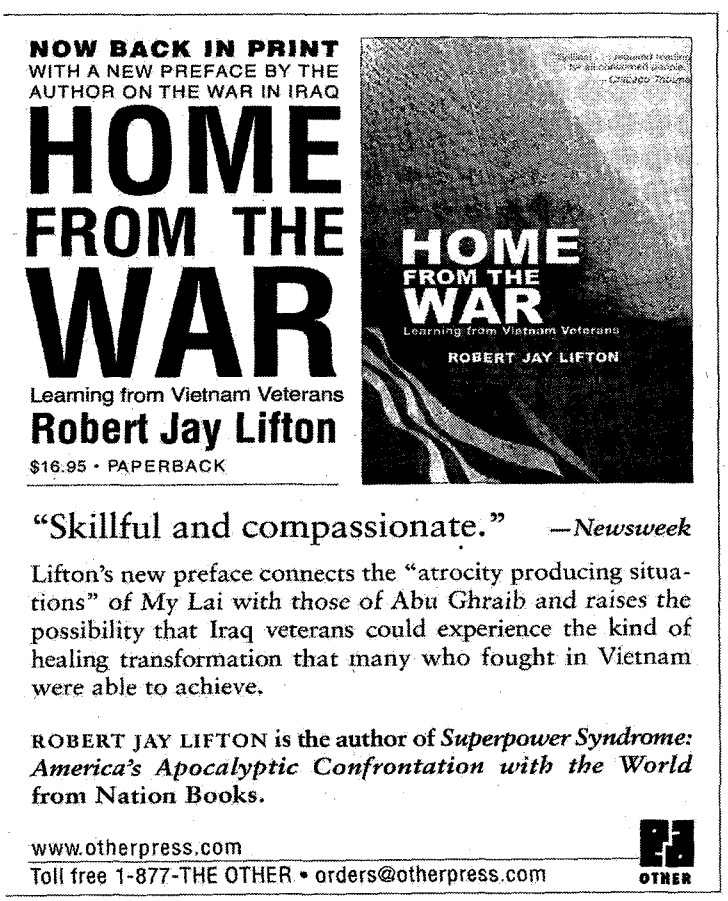
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ROBERT JAY LIFTON is the author of Superpower Syndrome: America's Apocalyptic Confrontation with the World from Nation Books.
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OTHER

Like all great pop artists, Lucas can read the dream life of the nation. The good news is that he's picked up an underlying uneasiness about the government. The bad news is that he's also noticed a retro trend in gender attitudes. The important thing is to be aware of both. RICHARD GOLDSTEIN

Richard Goldstein writes on the intersection of pop culture, politics and sexuality.

Stem Cell Wedge?

Finally, a wedge issue for Democrats?

The ongoing fight over stem cells has divided the GOP. Fifty House Republicans disregarded party leaders and helped Democrats pass legislation to remove restrictions George W. Bush had imposed on the federal funding of embryonic stem cell research, which scientists believe could lead to treatments and cures for many diseases. The intraparty debate was so impassioned that two Republican Congressmen on opposing sides engaged in a shoving match. Even though Bush called expanded stem cell research unethical and threatened to veto the legislation—which would be his first veto—antiabortion Republicans Orrin Hatch and Gordon Smith vowed to press ahead with a Senate version. Arlen Specter, another Republican senator championing this research, claimed his side could mobilize enough senators to defeat a filibuster threatened by GOP social conservatives and to reject Bush's veto. (The House majority was not veto-proof.) Meanwhile, the religious right—already furious that Republican senators had not nuked the judicial filibuster—accused antiabortion Republicans who advocate stem cell research of betraying the cause. Tom McClusky of the Family Research Council warned that his and other like-minded groups would no longer accord these Republicans 100 percent ratings. And the dust-up caused House majority leader Tom DeLay to return to Schiavo-style rhetoric. He called stem cell research—which uses cells extracted from leftover blastocysts (early embryos composed of 100 or so cells) stored in fertility clinics—"the dismemberment of living, distinct human beings."

Four years ago, Bush was able to straddle the line on stem cells. In a speech, he declared he had reached a Solomonic compromise. He would permit federal underwriting of research that used only pre-existing stem cell lines; he would not allow federally funded scientists to work with new lines, for that would condone (if not encourage) the continued destruction of blastocysts. Bush claimed that sixty lines were available, sufficient to support vigorous research. But there were only a dozen lines—not enough for effective research—and most were tainted by mouse DNA. But this stance enabled Bush to avoid taking a yes-or-no position on an issue that pits his social conservative base against popular opinion, which strongly backs stem cell research.

Now the sides are clearer, thanks to the efforts of Representatives Mike Castle, a Republican, and Diana DeGette, a Democrat, who pushed the issue to a vote in the House. "We've forced a frank debate," DeGette says, "and we've shown that the leadership of the Republican Party is controlled by a small slice of right-wing zealots." Bush and DeLay enthusiastically sided with the theocons. But not all GOPers are grateful for this op-

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portunity. Senate majority leader Bill Frist—who has had other troubles lately (being outflanked on the nuclear option by John McCain, inartfully handling the John Bolton nomination)—has signaled that he's not eager to bring the Senate version to a vote. A probable GOP presidential contender, Frist is caught between his need to placate the Dobsonite wing of the party and his desire to appeal to less extreme voters. Senator George Allen, another GOP White House wannabe, has been recalibrating—that is, diluting—his previous support for this research.

The stem cell controversy sets Republican against Republican and distances party leaders from popular sentiment. Voters yearning for cures to awful diseases that could affect their own families have reason—perhaps for the first time—to feel threatened by the social cons and their GOP allies. But does this debate pose a short-term or strategic hazard for Republicans? "A growing number of Republican House members believe this could be an issue in 2006," DeGette says, "and moderate Republicans are crazed about that." But Matt Dowd, Bush's chief campaign strategist in 2004, notes that it's "too early" to declare stem cells a wedge issue: "To get to that level, a large segment of the population has to have an emotional stake in the issue. And stem cells has not yet risen to the level of gay marriage or abortion. It's more of an intellectual thing, not an everyday concern." Nor is he worried about next year's Congressional races. Look at the Kerry-Bush contest, Dowd argues. John Kerry tried to deploy stem cells as a defining issue and lost. "The President," Dowd says, "wants to make sure there's a balance. The public supports balance."

That may be what many voters crave on brave-new-world issues. But with a veto, Bush will have a tough time depicting his stance as balanced and distinct from the medical-science blocking of the religious right. The party is not likely to crack up over stem cells, but this controversy—perhaps a prelude to other battles stirred by technological advances—is pushing Republicans to consider how far to go in identifying with diehard social conservatives. This fault-line within the GOP is hardly a death knell for the party. But one thing's certain: It can't be good for the GOP when Bush and DeLay suggest that Nancy Reagan and other prominent Republicans support an unethical practice that entails human dismemberment. DAVID CORN

After the Boycott... What?

London

The move to boycott two Israeli universities by Britain's Association of University Teachers (AUT) was a bad idea, but the faculty union's decision on May 26 to reverse the boycott did little to advance academic freedom while handing a victory to the defenders of Israeli domination. Indeed, the whole episode was a tragedy that needn't have happened.

The initial boycott was problematic for a number of reasons. By singling out Haifa and Bar-Ilan universities, proponents of a boycott ended up arguing specific cases rather than general principles. By scheduling the vote on the original boycott motion for a Saturday—and on the eve of Passover—despite

(Continued on Page 24)

REMEMBER THAT JOINT SOME OF US "EXPERIMENTED" WITH?

WELL, IT'S TWICE AS STRONG TODAY.

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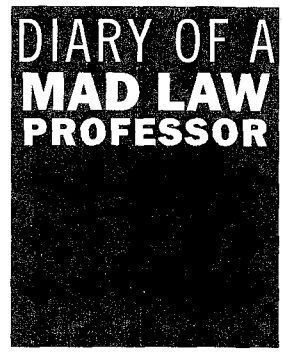
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Genetically Speaking



Recently, there was an article in the *New York Times* titled "DNA Tells Students They Aren't Who They Thought," about a sociology class at Pennsylvania State University. Professor Mark Shriver regularly administers DNA tests to students and has them analyzed for what the article calls "genetic ancestry." Shriver is a partner in DNAPrint Genomics, which has devised a test that "compares DNA with that of four parent populations, western European, west African, east Asian and indigenous American."

That the test could reveal ancestry based on broad migratory patterns over human history is not a surprise. Certain clusterings of genetic mutations over millennia occur more frequently among specific populations. Melanin concentration, for example, can reveal how one's ancestors adapted to more or less sunny climates; evolutionary selection for sickle cell anemia was a response to malarial mosquitoes. But there is no specific genetic marker that distinguishes one race from another. External differences—like hair, skin color and eye shape—are not linked to inner differences, no matter how strong the myths about skull size, extra leg muscles or musical aptitude. I should think that this would all be abundantly clear by this enlightened age, but none of it was laid out in the article in the *Times*. Rather, there were only three columns discussing the degree to which the Penn State students were revealed to be "white" or "black." "About half of the 100 students tested this semester were white," according to another instructor. "And every one of them said, 'Oh man I hope I'm part black,' because it would upset their parents.... People want to identify with this pop multiracial culture. They don't want to live next to it, but they want to be part of it. It's cool."

It is odd, this insistence that there is no such thing as race even as we wouldn't want it moving in next door. There is, too, a remarkable persistence in re-inscribing race onto the narrative of biological inheritance. This science is always pursued for only the noblest of reasons: in Shriver's instance, "the potential importance of racial or ethnic background to drug trials." I will save for later my concern about the commercial competition for "race-specific" medicines. For now, consider the description of one student who "discovered" she was "58 percent European and 42 percent African." Yet the "parent populations" tested for were described only as "western European" and "west African." The young woman "has always thought of herself as half black and half white because her mother is Irish-Lithuanian and her father West Indian." But Lithuania is generally considered a part of Eastern Europe, and therefore not technically part of the population tested for. And while "West Indian" is clearly used as a cipher for her African ancestry, one can be "white"—like Alexander Hamilton—while being West Indian. And the Irish were not considered white in colonial times.

Similarly, East Asians have gone in and out of being considered white in our history. South Asians, many being the closest descendants of the original "Aryans," are generally not thought of as white in this country. Yet the incoherent use of Aryan is apparent in any dictionary, to wit, Webster's: "1. Indo-European... 2. Nordic... 3. Gentile...."

The degree to which these indivisible habits work despite us, or unintentionally, is perhaps evident in what the Irish-Lithuanian-West Indian student—the one who thought she was half and half—had to say about the test results: "I was surprised at how much European I was, because though my father's family knows there is a great-great-grandfather who was Scottish, no one remembered him.... I knew it was true, because I have dark relatives with blue eyes, but to bring it up a whole 8 percent, that was shocking to me." What is interesting is the flat conception of half and half ancestry—a kind of assumed "purity" of blackness and whiteness. One side had to be entirely African by her measure, one side entirely European. If she's 58 percent European, she assumes the embodied 8 percent must be on the "black" side. The discussion never moves into the more difficult recognition that most West Indians probably have more than 8 percent European ancestry (but that like so many American families, hers might "know" but "not remember" the complicated, often clandestine couplings of the Triangle Trade). It certainly does not seem to occur to anyone that her white parent might also have an African ancestor.

The jumble of who we are, particularly as residents of the New World, with its centuries of rapid, recent migrations, is not explored in the *Times* article. The single mention of migratory patterns is misleading: The students whose DNA revealed both African and European ancestors were described as "members of the fastest-growing ethnic grouping in the United States...mixed race." But to the extent that a DNA swipe shows "mixing," there is nothing "new" about it; our ancestors have been mixing it up since the first mothers left central Africa—in the long-ago, ancient sense, we are all "African." Moreover, genes show neither race nor the cultural practices we usually refer to as ethnicity. The absurdity is highlighted by one of the Penn State students, a warm-brown-colored young man pictured in cornrows, who says that even though he tested at "48 percent European" he values his blackness, since "both my parents are black." He goes on to muse: "Just because I found out I'm white, I'm not going to act white." The article ends with an observation that "whatever his genes say," the young man will likely always "be seen as black—at least by white Americans." Consider the narratives herein: Genes "speak" race, whiteness is a biological inheritance that can be consciously "acted," blackness is defined by the eye of the white beholder.

If history has shown us anything, it's that race is contradictory and unstable. Yet our linguistically embedded notions of race seem to be on the verge of transposing themselves yet again into a context where genetic percentages act as the ciphers for culture and status, as well as economic and political attributes. In another generation or two, the privileges of whiteness may indeed be extended to those who are "half" this or that. Let us not mistake it for anything like progress. We've been this way before. ■

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ERIC ALTERMAN

In Re *Newsweek*: Which Side Are You On?

In what is clearly a coordinated campaign of deliberate defamation, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, White House spokesman Scott McClellan (citing George W. Bush), State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher and Pentagon spokespeople Lawrence DiRita and Bryan Whitman have all sought to blame *Newsweek* magazine for the deaths of Afghan citizens killed in weeks of anti-American rioting. The charge is intellectually insupportable and morally indefensible. Muslims, worldwide, did not require any new information to heed the jihadists' call to demonstrate against America. *Newsweek*'s mistaken report of official confirmation of a Koran having been flushed down a toilet inside what Amnesty International has termed "the American gulag" in Guantánamo follows years of confirmed reports of officially sanctioned torture, both physical and psychological, some of it specifically designed to offend Muslim sensibilities. A Pew Research Center poll taken in early 2004 found that large majorities in four Muslim countries held deeply negative views of the United States. In Jordan, one of our closest Arab allies, our approval rating hovered at a mere 5 percent.

As those in a position to know have pointed out, the connection between the riots and the tiny item in the American newsweekly is tenuous at best. Gen. Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the senior commander in Afghanistan believed the protests stemmed from that country's reconciliation process. "He thought it was not at all tied to the article in the magazine," Myers explained. Afghan President Hamid Karzai confirmed this view. "Those demonstrations were in reality not related to the *Newsweek* story," he said. "They were more against the elections in Afghanistan.... They were more against the strategic partnership with the United States." A cartoon in the conservative Moonie-owned *Washington Times* depicting Pakistan as America's puppy was also exploited in these same demonstrations. What's more, the FBI has documented detainee complaints at Guantánamo of Koran mistreatment, including an allegation that guards had "flushed a Koran in the toilet." The Pentagon confirmed five such incidents, though not the toilet-flushing one. (In Afghanistan, a Pentagon employee did report that an interrogator "took a Koran, threw it on the floor and stepped on it.") This all must be viewed against a backdrop of an Administration that repeatedly manipulated intelligence data to mislead the nation into war—next to which *Newsweek*'s mistake, while not insignificant, pales.

The Administration's anti-*Newsweek* campaign is part of its relentless war on the press—and more generally on democratic accountability—in this instance eagerly abetted by its allies in the right-wing media and even some members of the SCLM (so-called liberal media). In a case where the age-old (and much overused) slogan "Which Side Are You On?" really does apply, we should hardly be surprised to find Rush Limbaugh playing for the other team. He explained—apparently on the basis of mass mental telepathy—that *Newsweek* "wanted the story to be true" because the media "have an adversarial relationship with America" and "end up siding with the bad guys." His ideological bunkmate, Bill O'Reilly, added the calumny that *Newsweek* "magnif[ies] every mistake the military makes in order to hammer the Bush administration." The *Wall Street Journal* editorial page professed to detect "a basic media mistrust of the military that goes back to Vietnam."

Over at *National Review*, writers and editors participated in an orgy of media-bashing, all of it guided by Administration-sanctioned attack lines. Jonah Goldberg complained of "the media's unreflective willingness to undermine the war on terror." Dennis Prager charged *Newsweek* with being "directly responsible for the deaths of innocents and for damaging America," driven by its loyalties "to profits and to its political-social agenda," which "oppose[s] the war in Iraq and loathe[s] the Bush administration." Editor in chief Rich Lowry also blamed "a media culture, set during Vietnam," obsessed with "exposing wrongdoing and failures of the U.S. military."

Coincidentally, these attacks were also leveled at anyone who questioned the Administration's pre-war assertions touting its certainty not only of an Iraqi WMD program but also of its readiness to manufacture nuclear weapons and share them with its close ally Al Qaeda.

More disturbing was the willingness of so many in the non-right-wing media to embrace the Administration's *Newsweek*-as-murderer narrative. Martin Peretz, part owner and editor of the not-so-liberal *New Republic*, termed *Newsweek*'s editors "simply scavengers" whose arrogance "caused 17 people [to lose] their lives." *Washington Post* media cop Howard Kurtz bemoaned what he called the "explosive consequences of [*Newsweek*'s] reporting." (Irony of ironies—in writing about *Newsweek* editor Mark Whitaker's alleged journalistic crimes, including the overuse of anonymous sources, Kurtz invited an anonymous source to trash the well-liked editor as "the ultimate apparatchik.") Not to be outdone, self-appointed blogger cop Jeff Jarvis denounced *Newsweek* for publishing a story that "cost people their lives, put the lives of our soldiers in the Mideast at risk, damaged the American position in the effort to defend itself and spread democracy, and damaged the already tattered reputation of journalism."

The Bush Administration, in its campaign to eliminate democratic accountability, has consistently sought to undermine already faltering public confidence in the media, thereby further weakening the press's ability to fulfill its essential role in our delicate system of checks and balances. The jihad against *Newsweek*, like that against Dan Rather and others, seizes upon honest media mistakes to discredit the very idea of neutral, reality-based reporting. The longer the mainstream media fail to awaken to this unhappy reality, the greater will be our collective impotence when they finally realize it's time to fight back. For that reason—and despite its error—*Newsweek*'s fight is our fight too. ■

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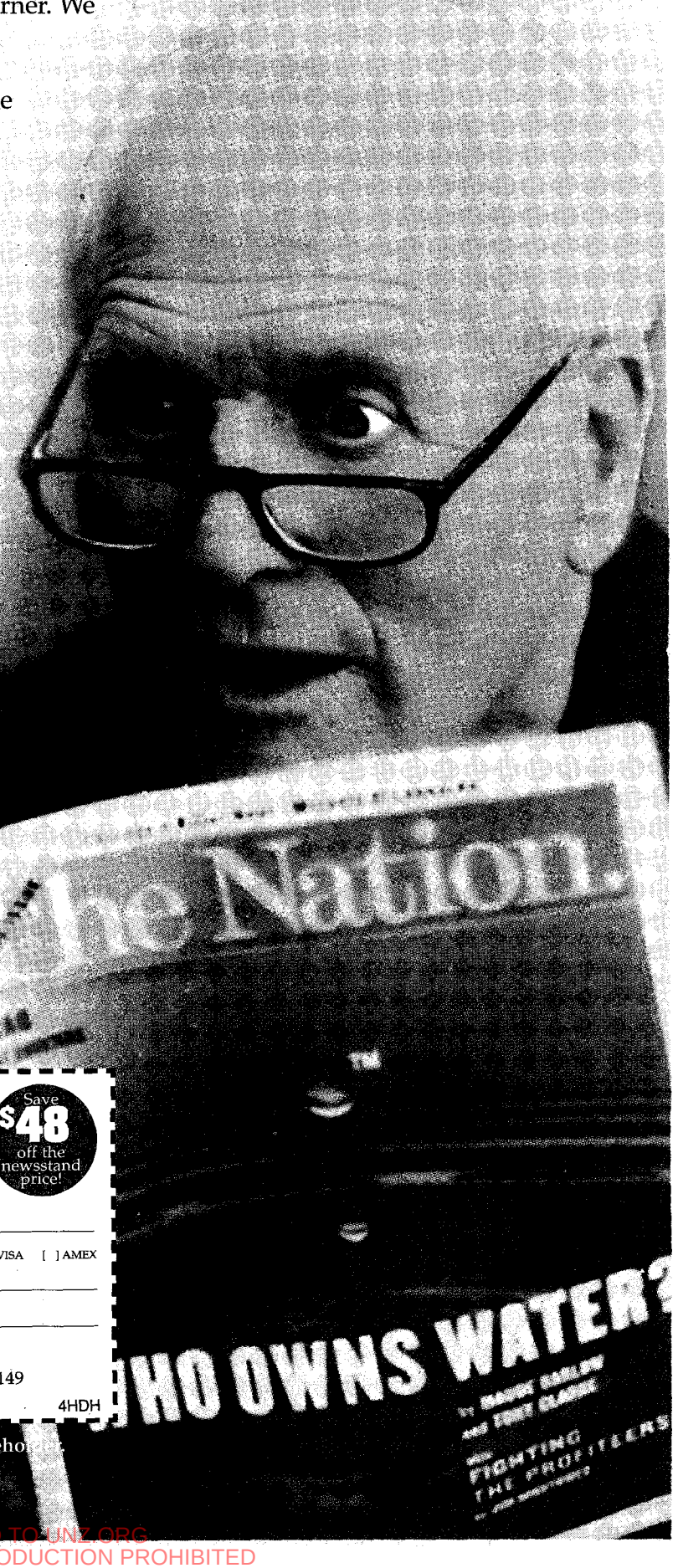

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ARTICLES

URBAN ARCHIPELAGO

PROGRESSIVE CITIES IN A CONSERVATIVE SEA

by JOHN NICHOLS

Something's the matter with Kansas: On April 5 Sunflower State voters overwhelmingly endorsed a meanspirited ban on same-sex marriages and packed school boards with more of those folks who want to teach creationism. But on the same day, progressives swept every open post in Lawrence, one of the state's fastest-growing cities, on a platform promising to fight discrimination, protect the environment and develop affordable housing. The new mayor of this city of 80,000, Dennis "Boog" Highberger, took charge with the announcement that "there are not many places...where an ex-hippie, disabled guy with a funny name can become mayor." The next day he opened an online chat with Lawrence residents with the message: "Greetings, citizens! Let the wild rumpus begin!"

Lawrence, a progressive oasis of higher education and high-tech development in what, thanks to Thomas Frank's 2004 book, is the nation's most famously conservative state, hasn't exactly gone wild. Highberger and the other officials elected with the support of Progressive Lawrence—a local group that two years ago wrested power from more conservative, pro-development forces—have focused on the basics of implementing "smart growth" strategies to prevent sprawl, working with local employees to improve delivery of services and promoting tolerance in a state where that can be controversial. "We haven't exactly reversed the whole 'What's the Matter With Kansas?' thing, but we're working on it," jokes Highberger, a lawyer who got Lawrence to officially condemn the USA Patriot Act but who spends most of his time on mundane municipal issues like funding library services and buying new land for park space. "The things that happen in Washington and Topeka are fairly abstract, and usually frustrating. When we make a decision on the city commission—on protecting the environment, on treating people fairly—people see something change in their backyard the next day. Local politics is where progressives should be."

Variations on the Lawrence story are playing out across the country, with local leaders and coalitions shaping a new, more aggressive politics in what has begun to be referred to as an "urban archipelago" of major metropolitan centers, aging industrial cities and college towns that represent progressive blue islands in what appears on electoral maps to be a red sea of conservatism. These are crowded islands, with enough voters to influence politics far beyond their borders, and they remain bastions of American liberalism: Every American city with a population of more than 500,000 voted for John Kerry in 2004, as did about half the cities with populations between 50,000 and

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500,000. In virtually every state that backed the Democratic presidential nominee last year—even traditional Democratic strongholds like Illinois, New Jersey and Michigan—it was only thanks to overwhelming majorities in urban areas that Kerry prevailed. At a time when the federal government is dominated by right-wing Republicans, and when liberal state governments are rare, cities are electing a new generation of progressives—a trend highlighted on May 17 when the second-largest city in the country, Los Angeles, replaced a cautious Democratic incumbent mayor with progressive Antonio Villaraigosa.

It is not surprising that urban politics trend left. Cities are more likely than suburbs or rural areas to be home to the people who are least comfortable in George W. Bush's America: racial minorities, gays and lesbians, immigrants, trade unionists, the working poor and the young professionals whose "new urbanist" homesteading has renewed downtowns from Providence to San Diego. Cities also have problems that are not solved by the free market in which conservatives place their blind faith: poverty, violence, decaying schools and NAFTA-battered industries. And at a time when more and more federal spending is being directed toward the military and tax cuts for the rich, old challenges are becoming new crises. Seventy-eight percent of mayors surveyed by the US Conference of Mayors reported increases in the number of requests for emergency shelter in 2004, and more than 80 percent said funding to meet the demand was lacking. The Bush Administration's assaults on funding for community development block grants and transportation and housing initiatives, as well as the additional burdens placed on urban schools by the No Child Left Behind Act, make the prospects for meeting urban needs more daunting than ever.

'I went to my first US Conference of Mayors meeting...and I was horrified. The corporate influence was pervasive.' —Dave Cieslewicz

Despite the challenges, or in some cases because of them, a growing number of progressives are taking their stand at the municipal level. "Local governments are the only place where progressive ideas can get any traction—where big ideas are being tried," says Madison, Wisconsin, Mayor Dave Cieslewicz, 46, a former chief of staff in a State Senate office and an environmental leader who was elected in 2003. "Cities are where you can break through the big money, the media spin—everything that is wrong with our politics—and capture the public's imagination." Unfortunately, he says, traditional organizations of local officials have been slow to catch the wave of municipal resistance to the nation's conservative moment. "I went to my first US Conference of Mayors meeting after I got elected, and I was horrified. The corporate influence was pervasive," Cieslewicz says, recalling a dinner where toy trucks featuring the Waste Management, Inc. logo served as party favors. "Here we were, with education, transportation and housing programs that are essential for cities facing cuts, and I just didn't see the sense of urgency."

Cieslewicz went to work forming a group to help progressive mayors get serious about policy. The first gathering of that "New Cities" organization, in February, drew mayors from Milwaukee, Salt Lake City, Berkeley and nine other cities. The second, to be held June 9 in Chicago on the eve of this year's Conference of Mayors meeting, may draw up to two dozen mayors for discussions about how to "seize the moment" created by the uptick in energy costs. They want to take proposals of the Apollo Project, an initiative endorsed by labor and environmental groups that seeks to achieve energy independence, and apply them at the local level. Another group, with similar values but a different strategy, was set to launch on June 1 at the "Take Back America" conference in Washington, DC, sponsored by the Campaign for America's Future. Cities for Progress (www.citiesforprogress.org), an outgrowth of the Cities for Peace movement of 2003—which saw 140 communities from hamlets in Alaska to New York City express opposition to Bush's rush to invade Iraq—will initiate a campaign to get elected officials and the communities they represent working together to influence national policy. "It's more clear than ever that decisions made in Washington affect my ability to do my job," says Chicago Alderman Joe Moore, who has worked with the Institute for Policy Studies to develop the Cities for Progress network. "I can't fix things in the neighborhoods of Chicago unless I do my part to make sure Washington does the right thing."

The notion of cities as generators of progressive policies is not new. At the turn of the last century, mayors such as Cleveland's Tom Johnson, Toledo's Samuel "Golden Rule" Jones and New York City's Seth Low were nationally known reform leaders. In the 1960s New York's John Lindsay, Boston's Kevin White and Cleveland's Carl Stokes were talked about as potential Presidents or Vice Presidents. As the optimism of the 1960s, with its model cities and urban renewal programs, faded, news stories about cities disappeared except when they involved violence, corruption or bankruptcies. Federal aid dried up. Suburbs sprawled outward. States took over urban school districts, prying power from the hands of local elected officials. Whereas mayoral positions had once been launching pads for political careers—former Vice President Hubert Humphrey came to national prominence as the reform mayor of Minneapolis; Moon Landrieu leapt from municipal politics in New Orleans to serve as Jimmy Carter's Secretary of Housing and Urban Development—the job came increasingly to be seen as a dead end best avoided by ambitious politicos.

But in recent years, that has begun to change. After three unsuccessful presidential runs, former California Governor Jerry Brown headed to Oakland, where he has renewed his political career and the community as an often controversial but always hands-on mayor. Former US Representative Tom Barrett of Wisconsin became the Democratic mayor of Milwaukee last year. "Being a Democrat in the legislature or even in Congress these days, you can only nibble around the edges," explains West Palm Beach, Florida, Mayor Lois Frankel, who served as minority leader of the Florida House of Representatives before making the jump to municipal politics. "Being a strong mayor is the best political job you can get right now. It's so much more a hands-on environment. You can do things quickly and you can really influence the quality of life."

Former Irvine, California, Mayor Larry Agran, who now

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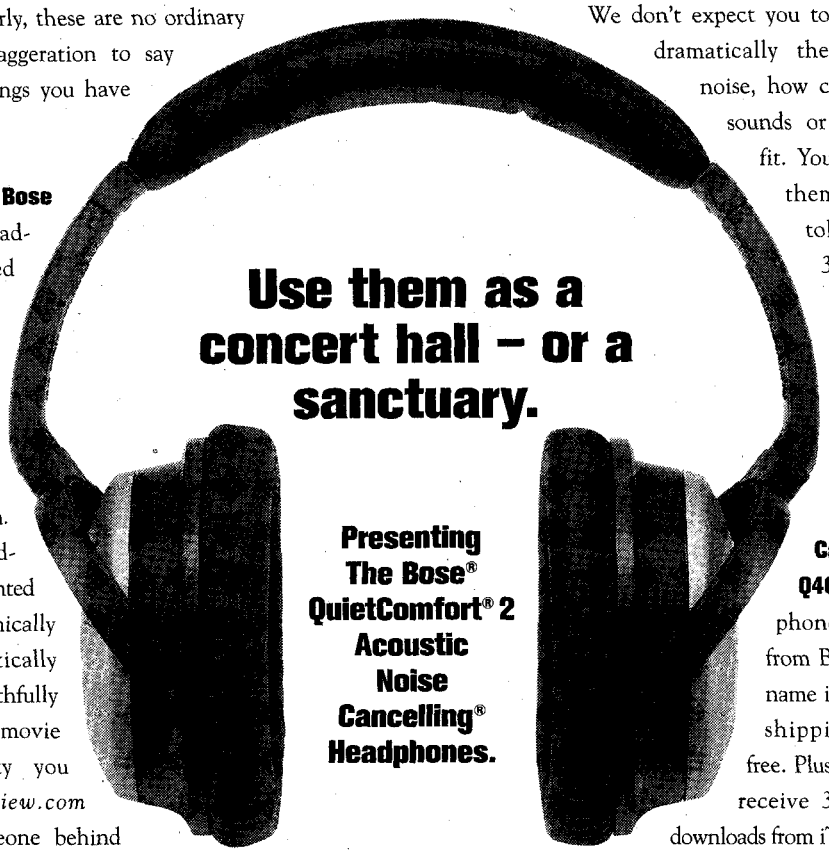

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serves on the City Council of that Orange County city of 175,000, proves the point. In a county that voted for Bush by a 60–39 margin in 2004, Agran and his progressive allies have developed pioneering programs in childcare, affordable housing, recycling and open-space preservation, most notably undoing plans by developers to turn a former Marine Corps base into an international airport. This summer they will dedicate the reclaimed open space as the 4,700-acre Orange County Great Park. The largest metropolitan park in the nation will allow residents of America's fifth most densely populated county to hike from the Pacific Ocean to the mountains through a continuous corridor of green space. The project was made possible by lawsuits, referendums and the willingness of Agran and others to use the resources and the powers of the city to annex the former base, negotiate with the federal government and literally break up old military runways. It cost Irvine about $25 million, but the city will come out ahead financially, officials say, because of the sales of adjoining parcels for parklike developments.

'We want people to get rid of this idea that working on the local level and working on the national level are somehow different.' —Malia Lazu

What was critical, Agran says, is that "we weren't bashful about using the instrumentalities of government to achieve civic improvement. That's what progressives have the ability to do: to use local government to effect change in the public interest." But don't think it was easy. Agran faced repeated electoral challenges from conservative forces that dramatically outspent progressive ones. Unlike the situation in state and federal races, however, big money can be beaten at the local level, he says. "In a city where the population is under a million, you can create a network of people in the neighborhoods that counters the smears and the attacks," says Agran. "A group of ten or twenty committed people can do a lot; a group of 300 to 400 people, which we had, can win."

Irvine is not the only place where progressives are making fundamental changes. More than 120 communities nationwide, from Ashland, Oregon, to Camden, New Jersey, have passed living-wage laws, raising hourly pay rates as high as $12 an hour for employees of firms that contract with municipalities. In Chicago, Moore is sponsoring a "Big Box Living Wage" ordinance that requires chain stores like Wal-Mart to pay workers $10 an hour and provide benefits. "That's an idea that couldn't get off the ground in Congress right now but that I imagine would have a lot of appeal in cities across the country," says Moore, who plans to spread the word about the initiative through the Cities for Progress network. Cities aren't just acting on the economic issues. While attempts to implement public financing of campaigns are often thwarted at the federal and state levels, they have succeeded in cities as different as Fort Collins, Colorado, and New York City. And 134 mayors in thirty-five states—including Republicans such as Mike Bloomberg of New York and Alan Arakawa of Maui County, Hawaii—have done at the local level what George W. Bush has refused to do nationally: agreed to meet the Kyoto Protocol's target of reducing greenhouse emissions.

Predictably, the corporate and conservative forces that have solidified their hold on so much of government are trying to prevent city officials from setting a progressive course. In the most high-profile instance of top-down interference, when San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom and New Paltz, New York, Mayor Jason West started issuing marriage licenses for lesbian and gay couples, state officials shut them down—and the President endorsed a constitutional ban on same-sex marriages. "The conservatives and the corporate lobbyists all like to say they're for local control, but the truth is that genuine local control terrifies them," says Madison's Cieslewicz. "At the municipal level we can break new ground, show what can be done, start trends that bubble upward." Cieslewicz uses the example of Madison's decision to set a local minimum wage that will rise to $7.75 an hour by 2008. Other Wisconsin cities followed suit, putting pressure on the state to increase its minimum wage. "So the cities started it, the state picked up on it and when enough states pass minimum-wage increases, the pressure is going to be on the federal government," says Cieslewicz.

Leaders of the Cities for Progress movement want to institutionalize that pressure by getting cities to pass resolutions calling for an end to the war and development of a universal healthcare program. By providing organizing assistance to progressive local officials and then linking these projects to one another, Cities for Progress hopes to create a resurgence of urban activism. "We want people to get rid of this idea that working on the local level and working on the national level are somehow different," says Malia Lazu, its national field director.

Leveraging change is not just a matter of policy-making; it can also involve changing the face of political power. "The best way for the Democratic Party to renew itself is to recognize that the next Great Society vision will come from the cities, and so will the next generation of Great Society leaders," says New York City Councilman Bill Perkins. The national group Progressive Majority is helping to elect local officials who will eventually climb the political ladder. "It's a way to build the bench," says Progressive Majority's Colorado coordinator, Joe Miklosi, who has worked with local candidates in communities statewide. "Once you win office in your town, people know you, they trust you. When you run for the legislature or Congress, they're more likely to vote for you."

The concept of building a bench was not lost on supporters of Los Angeles's new mayor. Villaraigosa's May 17 win made him the fastest rising Latino star in American politics and spurred discussion that, by 2008, his name will show up on Democratic vice-presidential shortlists. For Americans who still dream of taking progressive politics to a higher level, it makes sense to begin looking for candidates where progressives are already governing. "When you think about it, the argument for governors as presidential candidates is that they have served as executives," says Irvine's Larry Agran. "Well, a lot of mayors govern cities with bigger populations than states. So why shouldn't we look to cities for progressive candidates and progressive ideas?" Agran argues, "You don't look to Washington to find examples of progressives accomplishing things these days. But when you look to the cities, it's a different story." ■

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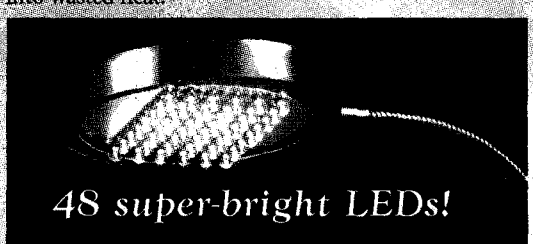

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PROGRESSIVE CITY LEADERS

The ranks of progressive officials at the municipal level are growing, as activists run for and win mayoralties and City Council seats. Here are eight local leaders who have already jumped beyond the boundaries of their communities to address state and national issues. They've done so with an effectiveness that has drawn attention and talk about their seeking higher office. —John Nichols

Antonio Villaraigosa: Mayor, Los Angeles

The first time Antonio Villaraigosa ran for mayor of America's second-largest city, in 2001, he did so as the candidate of a progressive coalition of Latinos, labor and white lefties. But a key element of the coalition was missing: African-Americans, most of whom backed Villaraigosa's opponent, James Hahn, a moderate Democrat, who won the election. Over the next four years Villaraigosa worked to earn the confidence and the endorsements of key players in the African-American community, such as Representative Maxine Waters, who had supported Hahn in 2001, and City Councilman Bernard Parks, the firing of whom as police chief soured many African-American voters on Hahn. On May 17 Villaraigosa ousted Hahn, and already he's planning to toss lobbyists off city boards and commissions; implement the LA-Rx prescription-drug discount program, which he initiated while serving on the City Council; and promote a massive initiative to develop affordable housing in a city with one of the lowest home ownership rates in the country. Villaraigosa's experience at the local and state levels of government (he's a former speaker of the State Assembly) and at the street level (he's also a former union organizer) holds out the prospect that he will emerge not just as the country's most recognizable Latino mayor but also as its most prominent spokesman for progressive ideas about governing.

Rocky Anderson: Mayor, Salt Lake City

Angered by the Bush Administration's refusal to sign on to the Kyoto Protocol, Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson committed in 2002 to have city operations abide by the treaty's greenhouse gas reduction goals. "In the face of the failure of national leadership in the United States on this issue, local and state governments throughout our nation have an especially important role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to reverse the dangerous trend toward global warming," Anderson says. The initial plan was to meet the goals by 2012, but Anderson's moves to purchase wind power, convert the city fleet to alternative-fuel vehicles and dramatically increase recycling mean that the city could be in accord with the protocol by later this year. Anderson, a former president of the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, is showing how a progressive can thrive even in an overwhelmingly conservative state. (Utah gave George W. Bush 71 percent of its 2004 presidential vote, the highest percentage nationwide.) After reflecting on the fact that he had won 55 percent of the Salt Lake City vote in a losing run for Congress in 1996, Anderson adjusted his focus and has since won two races for mayor. But he hasn't trimmed his political sails. He speaks out against English-only legislation and for gay rights, he's launched living-wage initiatives and he's successfully campaigned for a transit sales tax increase to fund commuter- and light-rail transportation schemes that are making Salt Lake City greener.

Pegeen Hanrahan: Mayor, Gainesville, FL

After 38-year-old Pegeen Hanrahan easily beat the chairman of the southern division of CNB National Bank for mayor of Gainesville in 2004, reporters wondered how a vegetarian, bike-riding environmentalist had trumped the city's business and political elites. Hanrahan, a Gainesville native who started volunteering in political campaigns as a teenager and was elected to the city commission at age 29, explained: "You can't underestimate the value of having people who've known you ever since you were in their Girl Scout troop." Hanrahan—who counts among her most cherished possessions a button that reads "WWWD: What Would (Paul) Wellstone Do?"—is, like her political hero, a good-humored, self-deprecating populist. An environmental engineer who made a name for herself as an advocate for cleaning up a contaminated site in one of the city's oldest African-American neighborhoods, she has worked as mayor to discourage sprawl in a city of 117,000 that, like so many college towns, is experiencing rapid growth. She's also got a flair for publicity; after Donald Trump scored a hit with *The Apprentice*, Hanrahan invited local community-college students to participate in "The Intern"—a community-service competition that awarded the winner a chance to work with the mayor.

Elaine Fleming: Mayor, Cass Lake, MN

Big cities aren't the only ones with big problems. In 2003, when Elaine Fleming became the first Native American to serve as mayor of tiny Cass Lake, a city located within the reservation boundaries of the Leech Lake Band of the Ojibwe tribe of northern Minnesota, she took charge of a community that had been a Superfund toxic waste site for almost two decades, the result of the St. Regis Paper Company's dumping of chemicals into the city's ponds and landfills. The chemicals are blamed for many illnesses; Fleming lost a sister to lupus and a brother to cancer, and she herself has been diagnosed with thyroid disease. Fleming, a professor at Leech Lake Tribal College, started talk-

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ing tough, referring to environmental racism as "terrorism in our communities" and decrying the Bush Administration's moves to undermine the Superfund program. She's getting results: State and federal officials have been testing soil and developing remediation plans, with Fleming pressing them every step of the way. The Green Party–aligned mayor is also teaching others—particularly young people—to flex their political muscle. During the 2004 presidential campaign she helped organize "Rock the Vote—Rez Style," a campaign to register voters, get them to the polls and turn Minnesota's indigenous people into a voting bloc powerful enough to swing close local and state races.

Ross Mirkarimi: City Supervisor, San Francisco

Ross Mirkarimi used to run campaigns: to make San Francisco a nuclear-free zone, to replace the Pacific Gas & Electric monopoly with a municipal power utility, to elect Green Matt Gonzalez as mayor. Now, as an elected member of the Board of Supervisors, he's helping to run the city. "I finally decided that if I was going to keep telling activists to run, I had better be willing to do so myself," says the 43-year-old co-founder of the California Green Party. At the heart of that calculation was the understanding that holding elected office did not preclude him from being an activist. Since his election last November he's campaigned to expand rent control to apply to domestic partners, pushed to set aside housing for artists and challenged the scapegoating of the homeless. And he's emerging as a champion of small businesses that are struggling as chains expand into San Francisco's neighborhoods. Mirkarimi has clashed with Mayor Gavin Newsom, a liberal hero nationally for his decision to permit same-sex marriages but an ally of business interests on the local level. And there's already talk that Mirkarimi might be the first Green mayor of a major US city.

JoAnn Watson: Council member, Detroit

Big cities often face budget crises, and they are usually resolved by reducing services for the poor. But when Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick proposed laying off public employees and reducing bus service earlier this year, City Council member JoAnn Watson countered with a plan to roll back all city salaries in excess of $100,000, freeze non-emergency contracts with private-sector firms and take other cost-cutting steps designed to preserve city services. Noting that the Mayor's moves came during the week when the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birth was celebrated, Watson, the former Detroit NAACP director, said, "We would dishonor Dr. King's legacy if we balance the city budget on the backs of poor people and those with the least." Later, Watson took on the big banks—which also happen to be big campaign contributors—demanding "that bank bondholders and other corporate entities to whom the city is indebted voluntarily reduce the amounts owed by the city by 10 percent across the board." Watson's fights have put her at odds with some of the city establishment, but she is even more at odds with the Bush Administration. To mark the President's new term, she sponsored a city resolution endorsing "Not One Damn Dime Day"—a campaign to boycott all forms of consumer spending on Bush's inaugural day as a protest against the war in Iraq.

Bill Perkins: Council member, New York City

When the New York City Council was debating a resolution condemning the Patriot Act, Council member Bill Perkins, its sponsor, said it was essential for the city that had been attacked on September 11, 2001, to send a signal that "abandoning civil liberties will not make us safer." Perkins, whose cousin was killed in the World Trade Center attack, was convincing: The Council backed the resolution, as it did another opposing the Bush Administration's rush to war. "It was important that we, as the representatives of the people of New York, say 'Not in Our Name,'" Perkins explained. The two-term Council member from Harlem gets excited talking about the local living-wage law he sponsored, measures to protect children from lead paint and landmark legislation to protect the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities. But he really takes off when the subject turns to rats, one of many issues that Perkins says "may not be sexy but are absolutely necessary if we are going to make our cities decent places to live." If he's elected this fall as Manhattan borough president, he'll keep going after the rats in New York, but he also promises to talk about the rats in the White House and Congress. "Manhattan is what people think of when they think of urban America," he says. "I want to use that bully pulpit to talk about what's really happening on the streets of our cities, and about why our services are suffering because the federal government is sacrificing our tax dollars for a war that we did not need to fight."

John Herrera: Alderman, Carrboro, NC

Two years after he finally became a US citizen, John Herrera, an immigrant from Costa Rica with a passion for progressive politics, was elected to the Carrboro Board of Aldermen in 2001. Now he's fighting to open the door for other immigrants. "If you are already living here and paying taxes and doing things citizens do, the only thing you don't have is the right to vote," Herrera told the local paper as he launched his push for immigrant voting rights. Long active in Carrboro, a town of 16,000 near Chapel Hill, Herrera organized a popular local festival for the region's burgeoning Hispanic community and served as vice president of Latino-Hispanic affairs for the Self-Help Credit Union in Durham before his election. As the first Latino immigrant elected to a municipal office in North Carolina, he's been an advocate for his community, but he's also been a leader in efforts to crack down on slumlords, an outspoken defender of civil liberties and the sponsor of a resolution that made Carrboro one of the first communities in the South to oppose the rush to war in Iraq.

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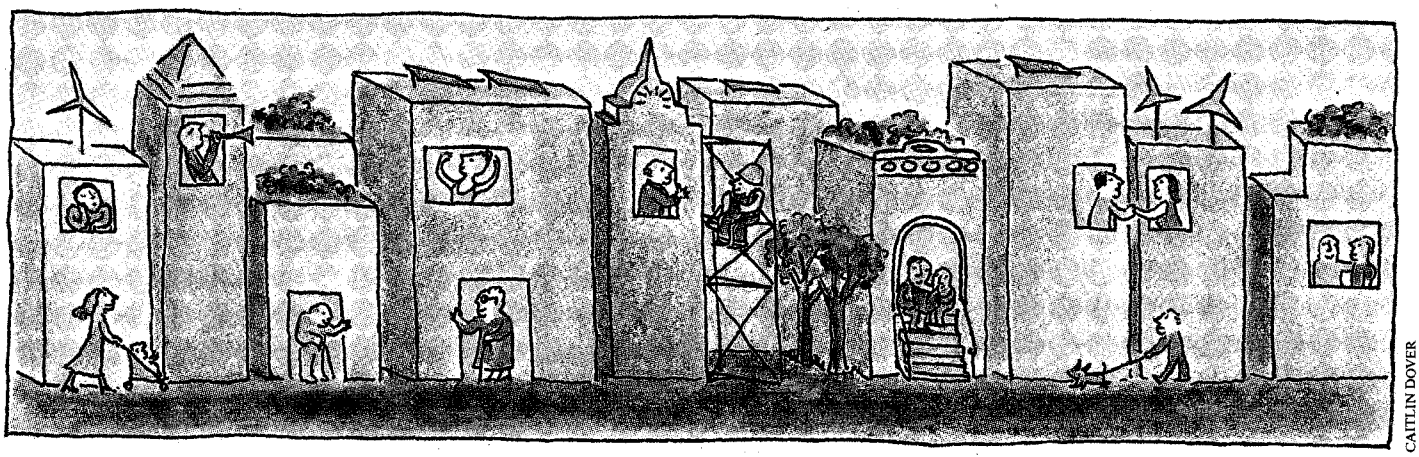

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Cities: The Vital Core

JOEL ROGERS

On a cold day in February, just a couple of weeks after George W. Bush began his second term, I sat down with a dozen men and women from across the country to talk about what government could do to clean up the environment, provide workers with a living wage and fight discrimination. This was not some gripe session to coincide with the opening of another dismal four years of federal policy-making; the people who had gathered at a conference center on the shore of Lake Michigan were mayors who have the power—and the desire—to create a progressive alternative to the constant claim that government cannot be a force for good. And, as the enthusiasm that characterized the February gathering to forge a "New Cities" coalition of progressive mayors illustrated, they are not going to let the conservative interregnum at the federal level prevent them from leading the way in the cities, which remain the engines of American economic and social advancement.

Unfortunately, most Americans, even most American progressives, do not always think of cities when they consider where the antidotes to the right-wing politics of the moment are being developed—let alone where the models for the next progressive era are taking shape. In most nations, cities are a big deal—the mayor of Mexico City is likely to be his country's next president. But in America, cities are the neglected stepchildren, exploited and abused when not simply ignored. Often they are portrayed as rank collections of pathology, modern Gomorrahs deserving destruction, and often enough they get it, with the aid of racist and destructive policies. American indifference to the death of our cities regularly astounds foreign visitors: After wandering the desolate streets of Detroit on a tour of America, French intellectual Bernard-Henri Lévy pondered the "mystery of these modern ruins" and wondered whether, instead of sharing Europe's love of cities, America finds the concept of such love "perhaps foreign to it."

It is time for progressives to reconsider and realign our views on cities—the most productive and most sustainable centers of our economy, the most vital and generous centers of our culture and, potentially, the most democratic and forward-looking of our many units of government. It is time to recognize that properly organized and empowered metropolitan governments—which link cities and suburbs in pursuit of goals that cannot be achieved separately—may hold the key to rebuilding an American economy of broadly shared prosperity. And it is time, above all, to understand that these perspectives are not unduly optimistic; indeed, they are the sentiments being expressed by the mayors and City Council members who have come to refer to themselves as "new urbanists," and who are beginning to coalesce in the burgeoning New Cities and Cities for Progress movements.

Cities matter to America, and they matter especially to progressives, for three basic reasons.

The first is that, notwithstanding population loss and disinvestment, most of our population and economy is still located in our urban centers. Even narrowly defined by their central city limits, cities account for about 25 percent of the total US population. Add their adjacent suburbs to mark out what you might call the "metro core," and you get a majority of the population. Add the suburbs connected to this core and each other—what the Census describes as "metropolitan statistical areas" (MSAs)—and you get upwards of 80 percent. And since metropolitan areas are on average richer and more productive than nonmetro ones, their share of the economy is even greater than their share of the population. The metro core contains more than half the population but about two-thirds of the national economy; the broader MSAs account for close to 90 percent of the economy. Worth emphasizing is that, within metropolitan areas, the economic interdependence of suburbs to one another and the central city is high. They share common infrastructure and largely common labor and product markets. About 80 percent of the economic value these

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regions produce is consumed within them. Our national economy is largely and simply their aggregate. If you want to do anything about the American national economy, particularly anything constructive, it follows that you must do it with cities.

The second reason is that cities contain the natural base of progressive politics. The metro core is where the black and brown and white working class live; where union members are most densely congregated; where the middle- and upper-class liberals are; where most of our lead education and research institutions are located; where most innovation, new commerce, art and pop entertainment starts; where the associated "creative class" and "cultural workers" generally reside; and where gays, single professional women and young people with brains and attitude don't feel like freaks. Their combined presence is felt in city culture. Cities are more cosmopolitan than the rest of the country, more committed to science and reason, more skeptical of business and military bullies, more interested in new things and much more diverse and tolerant. Years of federal and state budget cuts, the bias of education-funding formulas that favor the schools of newly developed suburbs over those of aging urban cores, poor planning, racial divisions and trade policies that have shuttered once booming factories and sent service industries offshore, have made it harder for cities to function. But, at a fundamental level, cities remain home to dynamic, liberal, solution-oriented populations who, when they come together, as they recently did behind the candidacy of Antonio Villaraigosa to elect him mayor of Los Angeles, can use democratic structures to chart a future that reflects their shared progressive values.

Cities remain home to dynamic, liberal, solution-oriented populations who can chart a future that reflects shared progressive values.

In the imperfect measure provided by major party voting, this is clear enough. Behind the famous red/blue map of Electoral College results, and the pundit hokum about that map's reflecting a great cultural divide, the actual electorate appears in varying shades of purple, with a moderate opinion structure not much different from that of a generation ago. But within this purple haze of our politics, a deep blue urban archipelago of voting does stand out. Stretching across the country, it marks the islands of city life. On those islands, as John Nichols's piece in this issue makes clear, the current generation of urban leaders is doing many new and good things—remarkable things, really—with an energy and practical intelligence and openness to experiment that should embarrass our national politicians. Far from being collections of pathology, cities are a prime source of new solutions to social problems. Indeed, well-run cities pretty much are the solution to most of those problems. Consider, for instance, the decisions of dozens of cities to abide by the Kyoto Protocol: While Washington fights the future, cities embrace it. When the mayors of the New Cities initiative gather in Chicago this month, they will not be debating whether global warming is real; they will be developing strategies to make their communities models of energy efficiency.

This brings us to the third and most important reason progressives should pay attention to cities. The sheer size and weight of metro regions make them a point of leverage in the national economy. Businesses today can make money in two broad ways: They can compete essentially on price alone to produce lowest-common-denominator commodity goods (the "low road"), or they can compete on innovation, performance and distinctiveness, for which customers are willing to pay a premium (the "high road"). The low road is associated with downward wages, rising inequality and insecurity, poisonous labor relations, environmental damage, rootless businesses and a shattered tax base for public goods—basically, what we've seen increasingly in America during the past thirty years. The high road, in contrast, is associated with higher wages, greater shared prosperity, respect for workers, environmental sustainability, more rooted businesses and stable communities, more capable and resourced public authorities. To compete in the twenty-first century, America has to get on the high road. Unfortunately, the Bush Administration, with its rigid free-trade orthodoxy and refusal to invest in innovation, is not taking it, and neither are most of the states, which vie with one another in a desperate race-to-the-bottom competition for the few factories that are still being built on the American mainland.

Cities are well positioned to follow the high road. Think Seattle. Think Silicon Valley. Cities and regions can do a great deal to choose the route they take to the economic future. Those choices are made easier when the federal and state governments are supportive. But even on their own, or in cooperation with one another, cities can provide an infrastructure of education and training systems, research institutions, advanced physical infrastructure, systems to promote cross-firm learning, information systems to measure accurately the value of social and natural assets and the costs of their renewal, systems of social insurance (such as healthcare) to improve the efficiency of labor markets, and a bottom line "social wage" independent of particular employment.

These public goods and conventions don't move around. You build them somewhere, and they stay there. And when they are well developed, companies begin to depend on them. These relationships give communities—and interest groups within them, such as trade unions—greater bargaining power. The synergy that is created when cities develop their social infrastructure does not just help create and keep jobs. By massively reducing waste in the economy, it can also massively reduce private consumption costs and increase real disposable incomes. Almost 60 percent of average household income is now spent on housing, transportation, utility bills and healthcare; savings of 40–50 percent in all these areas could now be achieved through better organization, yielding a 25–30 percent permanent increase in workers' disposable income. And through their effects, workers in high-road communities are made more secure, more truly equal in enjoying the gift that membership in those communities provides and more willing to do constructive things to preserve and improve these communities. High-road cities thus accept the efficiency of markets but supplement that efficiency with the productivity of democracy.

Are cities going to create their own single-payer healthcare

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systems? Not in the short term. But especially where state governments are cooperative, they can create structures that lower healthcare costs while expanding access. And they can do even more in other areas. It is, for instance, much easier and economical to develop mass transit where there are lots of potential riders. The cost of a street light or sewer connector is no greater on a crowded street than on a nearly empty one, but more people get the benefits and the costs are more broadly spread.

These are not utopian calculations. They work because American cities inherit vast assets from their past—built infrastructure, residential and commercial stock, diverse human capital—which are a lot cheaper to fix or improve than build anew. They already have the preponderance of our most advanced companies, and they are overrepresented in the more knowledge-intensive economy we need to expand in the future. They already have a much larger share of their workers in this "new economy" than other regions (about 60 percent, as compared with 46 percent in the suburbs, and a tiny and rapidly dwindling share in rural areas), which is a big reason why the downtowns of many cities, even in the current anemic recovery, are booming. Knowledge industries require information exchange, and cities facilitate that through density, the all-time promoter of chat.

This is where the new-urbanist mayors come into the equation. Particularly in booming college towns such as Palo Alto, Madison, Ann Arbor and Boulder, local officials have emerged as critical players in the sort of high-road economic development that is creating jobs without many of the challenges—pollution, heavy infrastructure demands—that once were associated with attracting and expanding industries.

But this is not just a college-town equation. Cities in general benefit from broad demographic and cultural trends: a growth in immigration, with cities and their inner suburbs the first destination of most new arrivals; a postboomer boom of empty-nesters who are attracted to low-maintenance condo life, shorter commutes and more cultural amenities than suburbs offer; a growing population of elderly, eager to preserve their independence and seeking access to quality healthcare and personal services; an increase in the number of "nontraditional" lifestyles and living arrangements, attracting everyone from single professional women without children to those raising kids on their own, same-sex couples with children and without, and people just deferring marriage or too busy with careers to bother thinking about mating—most of whom find the diversity, tolerance and crowded anonymity of cities more welcoming than suburban or rural life. As a result, cities have begun to reverse past trends of population loss; in the past decade, cities as distinct as Atlanta, Chicago, Denver and Memphis have experienced population growth, often for the first time in decades.

Such signs of life make the prospects for building a brighter future seem more realistic than at any time in recent years. What stands in the way is, as ever, politics: a federal budget that essentially sends the message "Bush to Cities: Drop Dead"; state policies that promote sprawl; regional politics that pit natural allies—central cities and older suburbs—against each other. But a growing number of young and innovative officials are finding ways to reduce the frustrations by working together and by borrowing ideas from one another and from some of the brightest thinkers on the planet.

The mayors I have worked with in recent months display an optimism and enthusiasm I have not seen enough of among progressives in recent years. It's infectious. We cannot abandon our struggles at the federal and state levels. But we need to turn more of our attention to the hometown fights that are far more winnable than distant battles in Washington. We always say we're for grassroots politics. Well, the grassroots are growing in our cities. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

age and have as much interest in NPR as they do in string theory. They are easily conned into voting against their better interest, and the talk-show hosts know which of their buttons to push, appealing to their fears, resentments, prejudices and cruelty. They made the difference in the last two presidential elections and will be a factor in 2006 and 2008. To make light of this boil on the body politic is reminiscent of the people who regarded Hitler as just a buffoon. I hope Keillor *is* kidding. JOE ADAMS

Floral Park, NY

■ In 1969 and '70, I was one of those college kids in a tiny radio studio broadcasting to a captive audience in the cafeteria and student lounge of Queens College in New York City. We had a fabulous time reading news ripped from an ancient AP teletype, playing LPs, covering campus demonstrations and sit-ins and, yes, achieving the weightlessness of which Garrison Keillor speaks. After we shut down for the night, I'd drive home listening to WWVA in Wheeling, West Virginia, or stations in Toronto or other points north fading in and out. (And I never did learn to swat that pesky fly with my 15-transistor, 9-volt portable radio.) RAY E. SKRABUT

TAKE A REST NOW!

Boulder, Mont.

■ Thank you to Lizzy Ratner for her timely article about Amy Goodman and *Democracy Now!* ["Amy Goodman's 'Empire,'" May 23] Amy is a journalistic necessity. However, I attended a speech of hers on May 13 at a church in St. Louis. She was so exhausted she could barely stand. Her eyes were deeply sunken and she moved like an 85-year-old. Amy—PLEASE GET SOME SLEEP! We need you, and *Democracy Now!*, for the long haul! PAUL RICHARDS

LET'S HEAR IT FOR LPTV!

Wauwatosa, Wisc.

■ Thank you for Rick Karr's wonderful article on low-power radio ["Prometheus Unbound," May 23]. I hope you'll discover low-power television. That service was launched by the FCC and Congress twenty-three years ago. There are now close to 3,000 LPTV stations in America, many of them broadcasting local independent fare. JOHN KOMPAS

PRICK UP YOUR EARS

Denver

■ There was no mention in your radio issue of KGNU in Colorado, which has expanded from Boulder to Denver on FM and AM. This is direct resistance to media monopoly and a beautiful example for other communities to follow. Community-based stations across the country are sustainable, practical experiments in democracy. EVAN WEISSMAN

Fountain City, Wisc.

■ Radio is a part of my driving life. You can record Internet programming to replay in your car. Just run a cable from the computer headphone jack to the microphone or Aux connector of a cassette recorder. JEFF FALK

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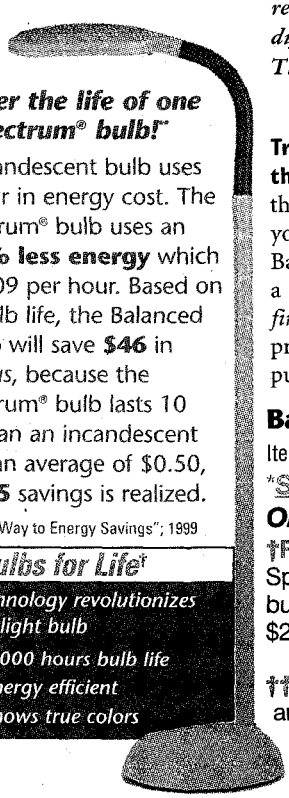

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COMMENT

(Continued From Page 9)

objections from Jewish members that they would not be able to attend, the pro-boycott forces seemed to rely on procedural shenanigans rather than open debate. By letting British activists rather than Palestinians take the lead, they weakened the analogy to South Africa, their supposed inspiration. Whatever the merits of their case, the boycotters' tactics made defeat inevitable, raising and then cruelly dashing Palestinian hopes for the sake of a sanctimonious gesture.

Even Jews who don't immediately think of the Nazi boycott of Jewish businesses might recall the Arab boycott against Israel—a boycott that long predated the 1967 war, and whose echo in the current campaign made many suspect that the ultimate object was not just the end of the occupation but the liquidation of the "Zionist entity." Palestinians are under no obligation to defer to Jewish sensitivities, but anyone interested in creating a broad, effective campaign to end the occupation ought to at least pause before picking up the boycott weapon. Still, there were Jews on both sides of the debate.

As were academics. Hebrew University professor Baruch Kimmerling wrote that he agreed "with most of the reasons raised in support of this call," yet felt that as a last bastion of dissent inside Israel the academy had to be protected. Ilan Pappe, like Kimmerling a prominent Israeli campaigner for Palestinian rights, argued in favor of boycotting his own university. Columbia University professor Rashid Khalidi opposed the boycott; so did Sari Nusseibeh, president of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. The Palestinian teachers' union favored it. Dividing people who all agree on the justice of the Palestinian cause is not a winning tactic.

If the boycott was a bad idea, why not be glad it was defeated? First, because whatever the effect on academic freedom, this is also a victory for an already overweening, powerful pro-Israel lobby whose aggressive policing of acceptable opinion has done more to poison intellectual debate on Israel and Palestine than a dozen boycott motions. The Anti-Defamation League, whose devotion to academic freedom led it to threaten a counter-boycott of British universities, had every reason to celebrate. And while boycott opponents may argue that their triumph was not a victory for Ariel Sharon, Palestinians will register yet another defeat. "Palestinian civil society was thrilled," boycott campaigner Hilary Rose told me. "They think the cavalry of the world is coming to help them." Now, presumably, they know better.

The decisive margin in favor of repealing the boycott revealed only the current balance of forces within the British academy. Still, as the rhetorical fog generated by the controversy disperses, and since the issues raised are likely to recur, perhaps it's worth clarifying a few points:

§ *A boycott is not a bomb—or a blacklist.* A boycott may be a blunt instrument, but it is not an act of terrorism. Andrew Rubin of Georgetown and others who objected to the AUT boycott nonetheless argue that as a nonviolent means of exerting political, moral and economic pressure the boycott is "a crucial political strategy that should not be dismissed out of hand." For all its flaws, the AUT boycott targeted institutions, not individuals—though language allowing exceptions for academics supportive of Palestinian rights could be read as imposing a political or ethnic litmus test.

§ *Academic freedom is not the issue.* The AUT has previously passed motions boycotting two British universities over pay and conditions; Fiji was also the target of an AUT boycott following the coup on the island in 2000. None of these were remotely controversial. Nor did most of the voices raised against the AUT boycott protest the campaign of systematic intimidation in American universities waged by such pro-Israel groups as Campus Watch. And in a political landscape dominated by military checkpoints, tank incursions, land seizures, house demolitions and targeted assassinations, and where many Palestinian students now find themselves walled off, literally, from their own universities, it seems obscene to repeat platitudes about "the freest possible...movement of scholars and ideas." Where were the American defenders of academic freedom when Iman al-Hams, wearing a school uniform and carrying only a book bag, was executed by Israeli troops despite being described, in a military radio recording of the incident played on Israeli television, as "a girl of about 10"?

§ *Israel is not South Africa.* The most serious piece of intellectual dishonesty by boycott campaigners was their deliberate ambiguity over whether the boycott was intended to end the occupation or delegitimize the State of Israel. Palestinians have every reason to regard the creation of Israel as a "*nakba*"—a catastrophe. But Jews have equal reason to suspect the motives of anyone who would grant national rights to Palestinians but withhold them from Jews. In the long run some of us might favor a binational state. At the moment, though, both sides have to start by recognizing the reality of their adversaries' attachment to the land.

§ *The AUT is not the ANC.* The South African academic boycott began as a simple pledge not to accept or apply for posts at universities that practiced racial discrimination. The wider ANC boycott came only after a massive campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience had been brutally suppressed by South African authorities; the ANC's armed struggle against apartheid never deliberately targeted civilians. By comparing themselves to the ANC, the AUT and their Palestinian allies are trading on moral credit they have not earned.

A boycott is a simple approach to a complex problem—a thumb on the scales of justice. Those of us on the left who thought this boycott was a bad idea must now find more effective ways to tip those scales. We need to make those who agreed with us see that until the Palestinians have justice, cries for peace will fall on deaf ears. And we need to prove to those who disagreed with us that when we talk of reconciliation, we do not mean surrender. This boycott was the wrong answer. But the question remains: If you are opposed to the occupation—if you are opposed to the humiliation of the Palestinian people—what are you going to do about it?

D.D. GUTTENPLAN

D.D. Guttenplan writes from The Nation*'s London bureau.*

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Beware the Holy War

PETER BERGEN

THE POWER OF NIGHTMARES

The Power of Nightmares, a three-hour BBC documentary directed by Adam Curtis, is arguably the most important film about the "war on terrorism" since the events of September 11. It is more intellectually engaging, more historically probing and more provocative than any of its rivals, including *Fahrenheit 9/11*. But although it has been shown at Cannes and at a few film festivals in the United States, it has yet to find an American distributor, and for understandable reasons. The documentary asserts that Al Qaeda is largely a phantom of the imagination of the US national security apparatus. Indeed, *The Power of Nightmares* seeks nothing less than to reframe the past several decades of American foreign policy, from the Soviet menace of the 1970s to the Al Qaeda threat of today, to argue that neoconservatives in the American foreign policy establishment have vastly exaggerated those threats in their quest to remake the world in the image of the United States.

The fact that the film has not been widely shown here is our loss, since it raises important questions about the political manipulation of fear. Yet *The Power of Nightmares* is also troubling for reasons other than the ones Curtis supposes. For the thesis he advances—that the war on terrorism is driven by nightmares rather than nightmarish potentialities—is one that merits considerable skepticism. It may be that Al Qaeda is less organized and monolithic than George W. Bush would have us believe, but it is a fierce and determined organization that has spawned a global ideological movement led by Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, whose influence and plans we have every reason to be deeply concerned about.

The kernel of Curtis's argument is that Western politicians claim "the greatest danger of all is international terrorism, a powerful and sinister network, with sleeper cells in countries across the world, a threat that needs to be fought by a war on terror. But much of this threat is a fantasy, which has been exaggerated and distorted by politicians. It's a dark illusion that has spread unquestioned through governments around the world, the security services and the international media." Curtis says that this illusion was set in motion by two seemingly very different groups, American neoconservatives and radical Islamists, whose war with each other conceals a history of tacit alliance, and even some ideological resemblances. As Curtis reminds us, the neoconservatives and the Islamists came together in the 1980s in Afghanistan to expel the Soviets, and they share a hostility to the Middle East's authoritarian dynastic regimes (although they seek to replace them with altogether different kinds of government). What is more, both groups view Western liberalism with distrust, fearing that it will erode traditional and especially martial values, thus weakening their societies from within.

Tacit allies against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the jihadists and the neoconservatives are now on an apocalyptic collision course.

Curtis begins his story in 1949 in the unlikely setting of Greeley, Colorado, where the Egyptian literary critic Sayyid Qutb attended graduate school. It was Qutb's encounter with the United States that helped turn him into the Lenin of the radical Islamists. One summer night, the puritanical Qutb went to a dance at a local church hall, where the pastor was playing the big-band hit "Baby, It's Cold Outside." (The tune provides the title of the documentary's first hour, as well as a constant musical refrain.)

Peter Bergen, a Schwartz fellow at the New America Foundation and an adjunct professor at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, is the author of Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden *(Free Press).*

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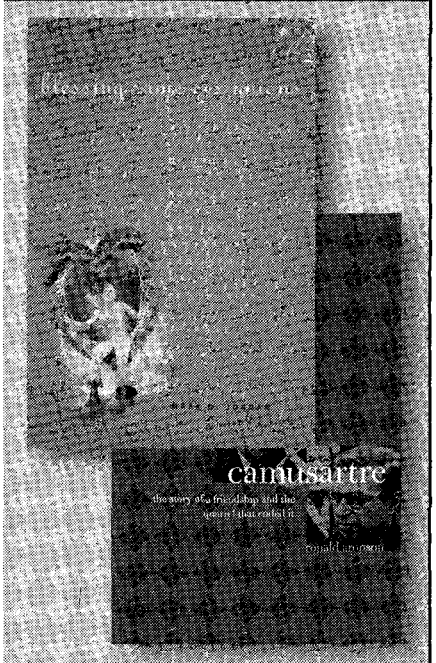

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The idea of a house of worship playing a secular love song crystallized Qutb's sense that Americans were deeply corrupt and interested only in self-gratification. On his return to Egypt, Qutb joined the Muslim Brotherhood, was arrested on Nasser's orders in 1954 for supposedly plotting revolution and was then subjected to the most dreadful tortures. Curtis says, "Qutb survived, but the torture had a powerful, radicalizing effect on his ideas." Writing from his prison cell, Qutb argued that Egypt's secular nationalist government was presiding over a country mired in a state of pre-Islamic barbarity known as *jahiliyyah* and, by implication, that the government should be overthrown. Qutb was executed in 1966, but he would profoundly influence a teenager named Ayman al-Zawahiri, who set

Is the revolutionary jihadist a secret sharer...

up a jihadist cell dedicated to the Qutbian theory that Egyptian government officials were apostates from Islam and therefore deserved death.

So far so good. Curtis has done some wonderful archival research to illustrate his film, finding rare footage, for instance, of Qutb in prison (and he wittily punctuates the narrative with passages of popular songs and old film clips). But in telling Qutb's story, Curtis argues that it is mirrored by that of the University of Chicago political philosopher Leo Strauss, a forced analogy that is emblematic of Curtis's occasionally questionable polemical methods. Curtis says that around the same time Qutb was formulating his apocalyptic vision of waging offensive jihads against the enemies of Islam, Strauss, "who shared the same fears about the destructive influence of individualism in America," was telling his students, many of whom went on to influential careers in politics, that liberalism was fatally weakening the US body politic and sapping Americans' will to defend "freedom." Intellectuals, he believed, would have to spread an ideology of good and evil, whether they believed it or not, so that the American people could be mobilized against the enemies of freedom. For this reason Strauss, we learn in one of many telling asides, was a huge fan of the TV series *Gunsmoke* and its Manichean depiction of good and evil.

The parallel is provocative, to be sure, but Curtis takes it several steps too far when he argues that Strauss "would become the shaping force behind the neoconservative movement, which now dominates the American Administration." In fact, Qutb and Strauss are not of equal weight for the Islamists and the neocons. In al-Zawahiri's 2001 autobiography, *Knights Under the Banner of the Prophet*, he repeatedly cites Qutb, while Qutb's brother taught bin Laden at university in Saudi Arabia in the late 1970s. And Qutb's claim that Muslim rulers who preside over countries in a state of *jahiliyyah* are effectively non-Muslims was the intellectual underpinning of the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981. Moreover, all Islamists are well versed in, and deeply influenced by, Qutb. By contrast, while it's true that former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz took a couple of courses from Strauss at the University of Chicago, and a number of Straussians have found jobs in the Bush Administration, Strauss's work as a political philosopher has had little impact on the world outside the academy. Indeed, the key drivers of American foreign policy—Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Condoleezza Rice—are in all likelihood more familiar with the works of Johann Strauss than with the dense, recondite works of Leo Strauss. (Curtis would have improved his case by focusing not on Strauss but on Albert Wohlstetter, a colleague of Strauss's at the University of Chicago who, during the 1970s and '80s, strongly advocated the view that Soviet military power was underrated, and who was an important mentor to both Wolfowitz and Richard Perle.)

The next pillar of Curtis's thesis is that the neocons and their allies exaggerated the Soviet threat, a precursor of their later inflation of the menace posed by Al Qaeda. It is positively eerie to watch then–Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld deliver a supremely self-assured speech in a 1976 press conference about the gathering strength of the Soviet war machine that just as easily could have been one of his gung-ho Pentagon briefings decades later. Curtis explains that the CIA found Rumsfeld's view of the Soviet military buildup to be a "fiction"; but that did not stop Rumsfeld from estab-

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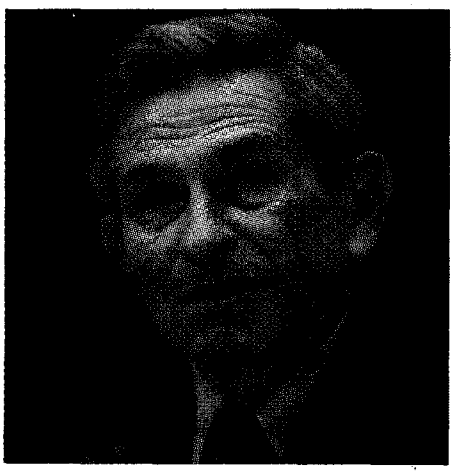
lishing a commission of inquiry into the putative buildup that was known as Team B and was run, in part, by Wolfowitz. In one of the strongest sections of the documentary, Curtis explains:

> Team B made an assumption that the Soviets had developed systems that were so sophisticated they were undetectable. For example, they could find no evidence that the Soviet submarine fleet had an acoustic defense system. What this meant, Team B said, was that the Soviets had actually invented a new non-acoustic system, which was impossible to detect. And this meant that the whole of the American submarine fleet was at risk from an invisible threat that was there, even though there was no evidence for it.

This was an early formulation of the Rumsfeldian doctrine that the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence. To devastating effect Curtis deploys Dr. Anne Cahn, a government arms-control expert during the 1970s, who explains, "If you go through most of Team B's specific allegations about [Soviet] weapons systems, and you just examine them one by one, they were all wrong." Team B's exaggerations, according to Curtis, were all in the service of the neoconservative creation of "a simplistic fiction, a vision of the Soviet Union as the center of all evil in the world." Central to this fiction was the idea that the Kremlin was behind the violence of militant nationalist insurgencies from Belfast to Palestine (not to mention the attempt on Pope John Paul II's life). Claire Sterling expounded this theory, which has since been thoroughly debunked, in *The Terror Network*, a book that influenced the thinking of Reagan officials and neoconservative analysts like Michael Ledeen, who now argues that Tehran has replaced Moscow as the terror network's base of operations.



...of the revolutionary American imperialist?

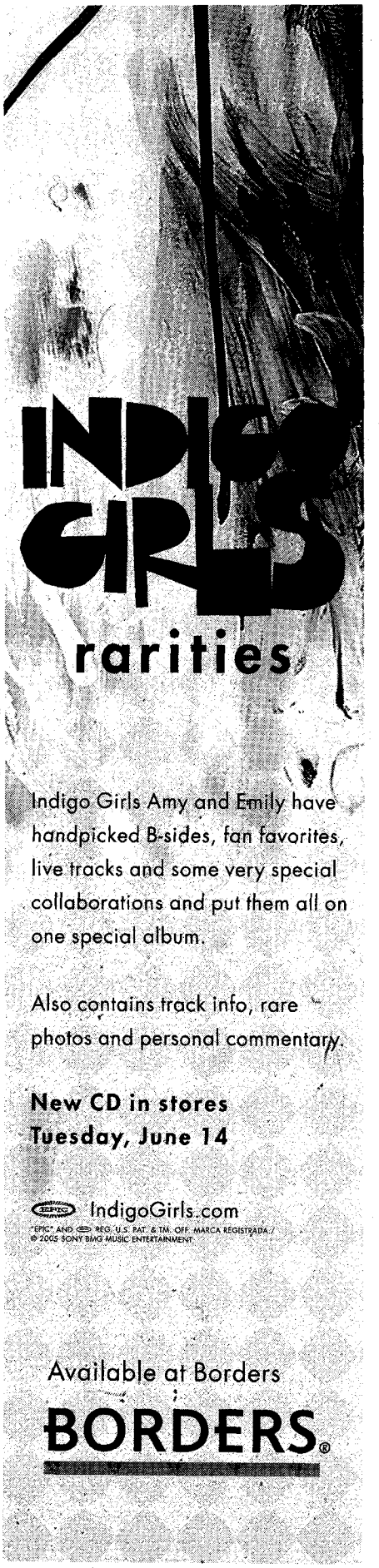
Curtis can be faulted for overlooking the horror of the Soviet system, something the neoconservatives appreciated better than most leftists, but he is correct that the neoconservatives injected a theological fervor into American foreign policy and that they were willing to look past the flaws of anyone willing to confront America's enemy—such as the fanatical Islamist Afghan warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose party received at least $600 million in US aid to fight the Soviets in the 1980s, and who is now one of the most wanted terrorists in Afghanistan.

Just as Curtis gets his account of Team B right, so too he deftly charts the history of Islamist militancy over the past several decades. But he blows it when he concludes that Al Qaeda is a phantasmagorical construct of US officials. Curtis tells the story of al-Zawahiri, who, like Qutb before him, was radicalized by the three years he spent in an Egyptian prison during the early 1980s, emerging in jail as a spokesman for his fellow Islamist prisoners. Curtis shows powerful footage of al-Zawahiri at his trial shouting toward the camera in excellent English:

> Now, we want to speak to the whole world. Who are we? Who are we? Why did they bring us here? And what we want to say? About the first question: We are Muslims. We are Muslims who believed in their religion, in their broad feelings, as both an ideology and practice. We believed in our religion as both an ideology and practice. And hence, we tried our best to establish an Islamic state and Islamic society.... The real Islamic front against Zionism, communism and imperialism.

Watching this footage you get a strong sense of both the forcefulness of al-Zawahiri's intellect and of his religious beliefs. After his release from prison he and bin Laden encountered each other in Pakistan in the mid-1980s during the Afghan war against the Soviets and forged a partnership. It is in recounting the nature of that partnership that Curtis makes his most explosive charge: "Beyond his small group, bin Laden had no formal organization, until the Americans invented one for him."

In support of this view Curtis relies, in part, on an interview with the British journalist Jason Burke, a friend of mine who has written an excellent book on Al Qaeda. Burke tells Curtis: "The idea...that bin Laden ran a coherent organization with operatives and cells all around the world of which you could be a member is a myth. There is no Al Qaeda organization. There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is no international network with a leader; with cadres who will unquestioningly obey orders, with tentacles that stretch out to sleeper cells in America, in Africa, in Europe." However, in his 2003 book, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror*, Burke is less dismissive of the idea that Al Qaeda was an organization than this soundbite suggests. Burke wrote that while the "al-Qaeda hardcore" consisted of relatively few people, "by late 2001, bin Laden and the men around him had access to huge resources, both symbolic and material, which they could use to project their power and influence internationally"—that sounds suspiciously like a "coherent organization" to me.

Indeed, there is an excellent example of how this global organization operated that, for obvious reasons, goes unmentioned in Curtis's documentary. In December 2001 Singaporean authorities arrested thirteen operatives of Jemaah Islamiyah, the largest Southeast Asian terrorist group, for planning to blow up the US Embassy there. It transpired that those operatives had videotaped the embassy as part of their preparations for attacking it and had sent a copy of the tape to Mohammed Atef, Al Qaeda's military commander in Afghanistan, so he could give the operation his blessing. In addition, a man who went by the alias of Hambali was simultaneously Jemaah Islamiyah's operational commander and a member of Al Qaeda's *shura* council, or deliberative body. Although Burke in his book was correct to emphasize that lumping together all the jihadist groups from around the world as "Al Qaeda" is a serious oversimplification, that does not change the fact that there *was* an Al Qaeda organization (an organization that has now largely been replaced by the militant jihadist ideological movement from which Al Qaeda first sprang and to which Al Qaeda has now given a tremendous boost).

Curtis claims that "Al Qaeda" was first "invented" in 2001 when US prosecutors put four men involved in the 1998 plot to blow up two US embassies in East Africa on trial in New York. During the trial they drew heavily on the testimony of former bin Laden associate Jamal al-Fadl, who spun a story about the Saudi militant that would make it easier for US prosecutors to target bin Laden using conspiracy laws that had previously put Mafia bosses behind bars. Curtis explains:

> The picture al-Fadl drew for the Americans of bin Laden was of an all-powerful figure at the head of a large terrorist network that had an organized network of control. He also said that bin Laden had given this network a name, Al Qaeda.... But there was no organization. These were militants who mostly planned their own operations and looked to bin Laden for funding and assistance. He was not their commander. There is also no evidence that bin Laden used the term "Al Qaeda" to refer to the name of a group until after September the 11th, when he realized that this was the term the Americans had given it.

There is substantial evidence that Al Qaeda was founded in 1988 by bin Laden and a small group of like-minded militants.

This is nonsense. There is substantial evidence that Al Qaeda was founded in 1988 by bin Laden and a small group of like-minded militants, and that the group would mushroom into the secretive, disciplined organization that implemented the 9/11 attacks. Two years ago the minutes of the founding meetings of Al Qaeda (which had been discovered in Bosnia) were described in court documents in a trial in Chicago. Those meetings took place in August 1988 and involved bin Laden and Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri, who would later become Al Qaeda's military commander. The participants in the meetings discussed "the establishment of a new military group" consisting of a "*qaida*," or "base." In a handwritten organizational chart of the new group, bin Laden, who then went by the alias of Abu Abdullah, is at the top.

In a 2001 interview with the *Arab News*, Hasan al-Seraihi, a militant Saudi cleric who had recently been released from jail, gave a description of Al Qaeda's beginnings during the late 1980s: "Al-Banshiri turned to me and started speaking in a quiet voice: 'You know that Brother Osama has spent a lot of money to train and buy weapons for the Arab Mujahedeen. We should not waste this investment after the jihad against the Russians. We should reorganize them under an Islamic army with the name al Qaeda. The army should be always ready to uphold the cause of Islam and Muslims in any part of the world.'" Similarly, Nasser Ahmad Nasser Al-Bahri, a bin Laden bodyguard who is now living in Yemen, recalled in an interview earlier this year with *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper that when bin Laden "returned to Afghanistan in 1996, he...opened branches of the al Qaeda organization in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and elsewhere."

Bin Laden himself recounted how the name "Al Qaeda" first emerged in an interview with an Al Jazeera correspondent shortly after the 9/11 attacks: "Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri established the training camps for our mujahedeen against Russia's terrorism [during the 1980s]. We used to call the training camp al Qaeda. And the name stayed." As early as 1999, in an interview with leading Pakistani journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai, bin Laden started publicly referring to Al Qaeda, at one point explaining that he didn't personally know everyone in his organization: "The number of brothers is large, thank God, and I do not know everyone who is with us in this base or organization." Bin Laden went on to note that someone named Mamdouh Salim, who had recently been extradited from Germany to the United States on terrorism charges, was "never a member of any jihad organization. He is not a member of the base." Indeed, when Al Jazeera broadcast a major documentary about bin Laden in 1999, the network called it *The Destruction of al Qaeda*, an odd choice of title if Al Qaeda did not in fact already exist.

Materials recovered in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban demonstrate that people within Al Qaeda referred to it as such and saw themselves as part of a larger organization led by bin Laden. Alan Cullison, a *Wall Street Journal* reporter, for instance, purchased a computer in Kabul that turned out to have been used by members of Al Qaeda, including Ayman al-Zawahiri himself. One memo on the computer dated April 1998, written by Tariq Anwar, was addressed to "Al-Qaeda Members in Yemen" and described the hassles of daily life in Afghanistan. Other memos were written in what Cullison describes as "language mimicking that of a multinational corporation." Bin Laden was referred to as "the contractor," while acts of terrorism became "trade." A memo from al-Zawahiri griped about how salaries had been halved for the militants living in Afghanistan and bemoaned the lack of accounting of monies spent in Yemen, the kind of memo familiar to anyone who has toiled inside a bureaucratic organization. Similarly, *New York Times* reporters recovered documents in Kabul such as one titled "Al Qaeda Ammunition Warehouse," which the organization used for tracking weapons and ammunition.

The 9/11 plot itself amply demonstrates the fact that Al Qaeda was an organization of global reach led by bin Laden. Although, as Curtis correctly points out, the 9/11 plot was the "brainchild of an Islamist militant called Khalid

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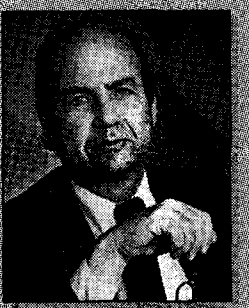

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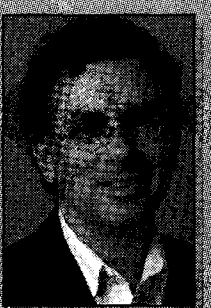

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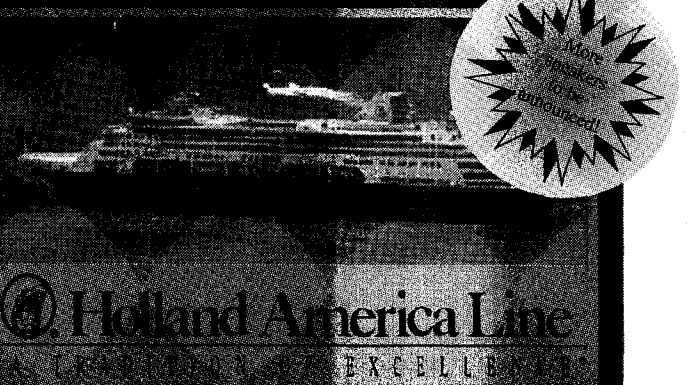
Nov. 12	Sat	San Diego, CA		5:00 PM
Nov. 13	Sun	Day at Sea		
Nov. 14	Mon	Cabo San Lucas, Mexico	8:00 AM	4:00 PM
Nov. 15	Tue	Mazatlán, Mexico	8:00 AM	6:00 PM
Nov. 16	Wed	Puerto Vallarta, Mexico	8:00 AM	10:00 PM
Nov. 17	Thu	Day at Sea		
Nov. 18	Fri	Day at Sea		
Nov. 19	Sat	San Diego, CA	8:00 AM	



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Shaikh Mohammed, who came to bin Laden for funding and help in finding volunteers," Mohammed's scheme for crashing jets into American landmarks would have remained only a powerful nightmare without Al Qaeda, as the plot needed not only hundreds of thousands of dollars but, above all, a large pool of young men sufficiently indoctrinated that they would willingly "martyr" themselves in the operation. The 9/11 plot subsequently played out across the globe, with planning meetings in Malaysia, operatives taking flight lessons in the United States, coordination by plot leaders based in Hamburg, money transfers from Dubai and the recruitment of suicide operatives from countries around the Middle East—all activities that were ultimately overseen by Al Qaeda's leaders in Afghanistan.

While bin Laden did not involve himself in the details of the 9/11 operation, he was its ultimate commander. In 2002, when Al Jazeera reporter Yosri Fouda interviewed Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who had together coordinated the 9/11 attacks, bin al-Shibh told Fouda that he had traveled to Pakistan from Hamburg in late August 2001 to insure that bin Laden was apprised of the timing of the attacks five days before they happened. Bin Laden's supervisory role in the attacks on Washington and New York is amplified in *The 9/11 Commission Report*, which explains that in 1999 bin Laden appointed Mohamed Atta to be the lead hijacker. The report concludes, "It is clear, then, that Bin Laden and Atef [his military commander] were very much in charge of the operation." The same can also be said of Al Qaeda's attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. In 1993 bin Laden dispatched an aide to case the US Embassy in Kenya, and when he was shown photographs from that trip he pointed to the exact location where he thought the truck bomb should be detonated.

Because Curtis does not believe that Al Qaeda is an organization directed by Osama bin Laden, he unwittingly aligns himself at times with the Bush Administration, whose failure to capture bin Laden remains such a source of embarrassment that it seldom dares to utter his name. Take, for instance, Curtis's discussion of the battle at Tora Bora in eastern Afghanistan, where bin Laden and his followers battled with several hundred soldiers of the Northern Alliance and a handful of US Special Forces during the first two weeks of December 2001. Just as the Bush Administration minimizes the significance of Tora Bora, since it was the one moment after 9/11 when the United States had a good idea of bin Laden's location, so Curtis suggests that Tora Bora is but a "few small caves" and finds no convincing evidence that Al Qaeda members had holed up there. Those who followed the American elections will remember that when Senator John Kerry said President Bush had squandered an opportunity to nab bin Laden "when we had him cornered in the mountains," Bush dismissed Kerry's assertion as "a wild claim."

Since it wasn't a state, Al Qaeda simply didn't fit the Bush Administration's view of what constituted a threat—until it was too late.

In fact, according to a widely reported background briefing by Pentagon officials in mid-December 2001, there was "reasonable certainty" that bin Laden was at Tora Bora, a judgment based on intercepted radio transmissions. Last year, Luftullah Mashal, a senior official in Afghanistan's Interior Ministry, told me that based on conversations he had had with a Saudi Al Qaeda financier and bin Laden's cook, both of whom were at the battle, bin Laden was indeed at Tora Bora. In June 2003 I met with several US counterterrorism officials, one of whom explained, "We are confident that [bin Laden] was at Tora Bora and disappeared with a small group." And the editor of *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, Abdel Bari Atwan, a consistently accurate source of information about Al Qaeda, has reported that bin Laden was wounded in the shoulder at Tora Bora. Indeed, in an audiotape released on Al Jazeera television two years ago, bin Laden recounted his own vivid memories of the Tora Bora battle. "We were about 300 holy warriors. We dug 100 trenches over an area of one square mile, so as to avoid the huge human losses from the [American] bombardment." And last August *Al Sharq Al Awsat* newspaper published the account of a Moroccan guard of bin Laden's, Abdallah Tabarak, who was also at Tora Bora: "We entered Tora Bora, where we stayed for twenty days. From there, Ayman al-Zawahiri fled.... Afterward, bin Laden fled with his son Muhammad." In short, there is plenty of evidence that bin Laden and hundreds of his followers were at Tora Bora, a fact that undercuts both the Bush Administration's and Curtis's reconstruction of the battle.

In his effort to portray Al Qaeda as a construct of US officialdom, Curtis misses the real story about the Bush Administration and Al Qaeda. It's not that Bush officials created the myth of a nonexistent organization but that Al Qaeda simply did not fit their worldview of what constituted a serious threat, and so they largely ignored it until they evacuated their offices on the morning of September 11, 2001. A database search for any statements by senior Bush officials about bin Laden or Al Qaeda that were made before the 9/11 attacks yields negligible results. And we know from the 9/11 Commission that while Bush Cabinet officials met thirty-three times before 9/11, only one of their meetings was about terrorism. Al Qaeda was not a subject that exercised senior Bush officials either privately or publicly before 9/11 because they were preoccupied by state-based threats—hence their focus on China, Iraq and ballistic missile defenses (which do nothing, of course, to protect against terrorist attacks).

This was especially odd because rarely have our enemies warned us so often about their intentions. Imagine for a minute that officials in the Japanese high command, beginning in 1937, repeatedly stated that they were intending to attack the United States. Imagine then how differently the events of Pearl Harbor might have played out four years later. Well, that's exactly what bin Laden did beginning in 1997, repeatedly warning in widely broadcast interviews on CNN, ABC and Al Jazeera that he was launching a war against the United States. But those warnings were taken by certain members of the Bush Administration as the fulminations of a wannabe rather than a capable adversary. As former counterterrorism coordinator Richard Clarke recounts in his book *Against All Enemies*, when the Deputies Committee of sub-Cabinet officials met for the first time in April 2001 to discuss terrorism, Wolfowitz—who had long been preoccupied by discredited conspiracy theories that Iraq was behind the first World Trade Center attack, in 1993—testily said, "Well, I just don't understand why we are beginning talking about this one man bin Laden." In short, Wolfowitz, at least until the 9/11 attacks, would have agreed with Curtis's assessment that the threat posed by Al Qaeda was a "fantasy." The leading neoconservative in the Administration did not seek to inflate the Al Qaeda threat but rather misunderstood its significance—until it was too late.

It is in the final hour of his documentary that Curtis's argument that Bush officials

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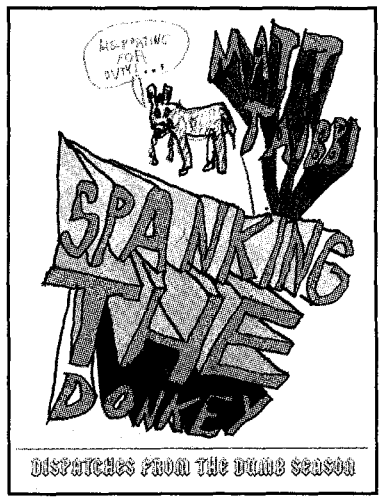

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have distorted the Al Qaeda threat takes its strongest shape. A critical element of the Bush Administration's approach to the threat is that there are "sleeper cells" in the United States, a "greens under the bed" fixation that Curtis characterizes as a chase for a "phantom enemy":

> Thousands were detained, as all branches of the law and the military were told to look for terrorists.... And, bit by bit, the government found the network: a series of hidden cells in cities around the country from Buffalo to Portland.... The Americans called them "sleeper cells" and decided that they had just been waiting to strike. But in reality there is very little evidence that any of those arrested had anything at all to do with terrorist plots.

Curtis illustrates this with a story that owes something to the Keystone Kops and Inspector Clouseau. After 9/11 four Arab teenagers living in Detroit were arrested on suspicion of being an Al Qaeda sleeper cell, following a tip from a known con man. US officials subsequently found a videotape of a trip the teenagers had made to Disneyland and became convinced that it was a "casing tape" for a future terrorist attack. As Ron Hansen, a reporter for the *Detroit News*, explains,

> I could never get past the fact that the tape just looked like a tourist tape. The Disneyland ride, for example, was a lengthy queue, people just making their way to the ride. The camera occasionally pans to look at the rocks on the wall, made to look like an Indiana Jones movie, and after several minutes the camera, it pans across and shows a trash can momentarily, and then continues off to look into the crowd. The [government] expert basically said that, by flashing on that trash can for a moment, the people who are part of this conspiracy to conduct these kinds of terrorist operations—they would understand what this is all about: how to locate a bomb in Disneyland in California.

The case became even more bizarre when officials also charged that the Detroit teenagers were planning to attack a US base in Turkey. The drawings, discovered in a diary, were later determined to be the demented doodles of a Yemeni who believed he was the minister of defense for the entire Middle East and who had committed suicide a year before any of the accused had arrived in Detroit. Eventually, the terrorism convictions of the teenagers were overturned.

The Detroit case is emblematic of so many of the "terrorism" cases that US officials have prosecuted since 9/11, which have often followed the trajectory of a tremendous initial trumpeting by the government only to collapse, or to be revealed as something less than earth-shattering, when the details emerge months later. Who can forget Chaplain James Yee, the Al Qaeda spy at Guantánamo who turned out to be cheating not on his country but on his wife? Or the unfortunate Oregon lawyer busted for his alleged role in the Madrid bombing attacks? Or, as Curtis points out, how the Justice Department held a press conference to announce the disruption of an "Al Qaeda terrorist cell" in Buffalo, New York, when in reality those arrested had made the dumb mistake of lying to federal investigators about briefly attending a Taliban training camp at a moment when it was unclear that this was a crime, and there was no evidence that they were involved in terrorism? The Buffalo case was, in sum, the ex post facto criminalization of bad judgment, not the discovery of an Al Qaeda cell or the prevention of a terrorist attack.

Indeed, an authoritative survey by NYU's Center on Law and Security released in February found that of the 119 criminal cases the Bush Administration has pursued under the rubric of the war on terrorism since 9/11, "the courts have indicted relatively few individuals on the charge of direct acts of terrorism and convicted only one [Richard Reid]," the so-called "shoe bomber," who, of course, wasn't an American sleeper cell but a British-Jamaican who tried to blow up an American Airlines flight he boarded not in Paris, Texas, but in Paris, France.

The American sleeper-cell phenomenon has been much exaggerated by both US officials and hyperventilating stories in the media, which is not to say that sleepers have not existed in the past. For instance, Ali Mohamed, Al Qaeda's military trainer, was a US Army sergeant in the late 1980s who married a Mexican-American woman and was working as a computer network specialist in California when he was arrested in 1998, thirteen years after first arriving in the States. Mohamed was the aide bin Laden dispatched to case the US Embassy in Kenya in 1993, five years before it was destroyed by Al Qaeda's local cell.

However, since 9/11 there has been no evidence of sleepers like Mohamed operating in the United States. Either these sleeper cells are so asleep they are effectively dead, or they simply don't exist. The onset of the Iraq War and the presidential election both offered perfect occasions for the supposed cells to strike, but nothing happened. And

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the 9/11 Commission, building on the work of the largest criminal investigation in history, concluded that the hijackers did not have a support network in this country. This fact, taken together with the lack of real terrorism cases or terrorist attacks in the United States, leads one to surmise that there are no American sleeper cells. And support for this view came from an unlikely quarter in March: The FBI, in a leaked report, concluded that "US Government efforts to date also have not revealed evidence of concealed cells or networks acting in the homeland as sleepers."

That's the good news. But is that the real problem, anyway? There have been sleepers such as Ali Mohamed who have embedded themselves in American society for many years, but the real threat from Islamist terrorists has historically come from visitors to the country. That was the case in the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center—the mastermind of which, Ramzi Yousef, arrived from Pakistan intent on attacking American targets—and that was also the case in the 9/11 attacks. It was also true of Ahmed Ressam, who was stopped at a Canadian border crossing in December 1999 on a mission to bomb Los Angeles International Airport, and also of Reid.

In fact, the Islamist terrorist threat to the United States today largely emanates from Europe, not from domestic sleeper cells or, as is popularly imagined, the graduates of Middle Eastern madrasas, functional idiots who can do little more than read the Koran. Reid is British, Al Qaeda member Zacarias Moussaoui is French and the 9/11 pilots became militant in Hamburg. The attacks in Madrid last year that killed 191, and the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, demonstrate that men animated by Al Qaeda's worldview have recently conducted significant acts of terrorism in Europe, a trend that is likely to accelerate as continued heavy Muslim immigration into Europe collides with widespread racism to create a population of alienated Muslims who often feel that no matter how much money they make, or how long their families have been in the country, as Pakistanis in London they are never quite British, or as Algerians in Paris they are not quite French, or as Moroccans in Madrid they can never be really Spanish. These are not powerful nightmares; they are a reality, a view that Curtis may finally come around to when a significant terrorist attack is carried out in London, which British authorities regard as inevitable.

Still, despite my many disagreements

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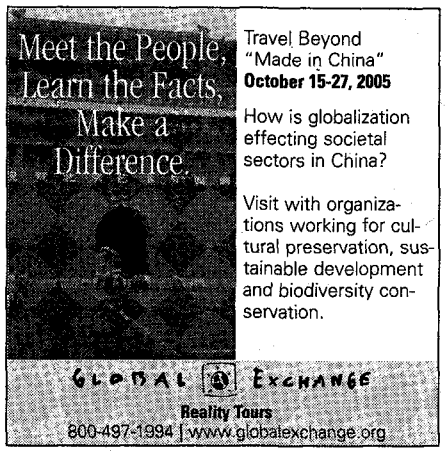

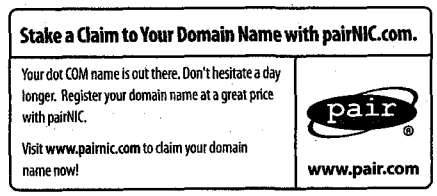
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with *The Power of Nightmares*, which sometimes has the feel of a Noam Chomsky lecture channeled by Monty Python, it is a richly rewarding film because it treats its audience as adults capable of following complex arguments. This is a vision of the audience that has been almost entirely abandoned in the executive suites of American television networks. It would be refreshing if one of those executives took a chance on *The Power of Nightmares*. After all, its American counterpart, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, earned more money than any documentary in history. And what Curtis has to say is a helluva lot more interesting than what Michael Moore had to say. ■

FILMS

Adult Content

STUART KLAWANS

HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE • MADAGASCAR • OR (MY TREASURE) • HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The title contraption in *Howl's Moving Castle* clanks and teeters through the countryside on giant chicken feet. The corpulent body, carpentered out of mismatched old buildings, changes shape with each step, as eaves and turrets and bays and dormers creek apart and collapse back together. From the face, two cannons protrude like telescoping eyes. From the rear dangles a cabooselike tail, fitted with a wooden door. Smoke blasts through chimneys and the odd crevice, as if to remind you that this machine belongs to the era of steam power. But then, the steam is produced by a captive fire demon, and Howl himself is a wizard, so you won't learn how the mechanism works.

In its merger of antiquarianism and fantasy, artisanship and magic, the castle neatly sums up the art of its creator, Hayao Miyazaki. He is the only major filmmaker left who does traditional, hand-drawn animation—a laborious technique, which in Miyazaki's use has yielded astonishingly strange and beautiful fables, such as *Spirited Away*. I recall visiting a theater not long after that picture won an Oscar, to see what reaction the film was getting from its new-found public. The place was crowded with parents who had assumed that a feature-length animation must be a kids' movie, and who now looked worried. Huddled close to them were clusters of 5- and 6-year-olds, having an experience they will someday struggle to piece together with the help of puzzled analysts.

If you, too, go to movies with small children, then you should know that *Howl's Moving Castle* is the story of a senseless war, which reduces cities to rubble and turns landscapes into crimson infernos. More immediately, it is the story of a drab young girl—a milliner named Sophie—who runs afoul of a witch and so is changed into a stooped old woman. This isn't always as horrific as it sounds. Although Miyazaki lets you feel the indignities of advanced age—the drawings emphasize knotted fingers, beaked nose, bulging eyes—Sophie had never thought of herself as sexually desirable, and so she has lost very little in the way of hope, while gaining in recompense a great deal of craftiness and courage. These qualities prove useful when she takes refuge with Howl, a wizard of Byronic glamour, who has the great merit of being a war resister and the great faults of being vain and superficial. Yes, Sophie is in love with him, but she tries not to be bitter.

Miyazaki has taken this plot from a novel by Diana Wynne Jones, adapting it to his own spooky preoccupations without unnecessarily clarifying its meanings. Why, for example, does Sophie sometimes become younger again, just for a few moments? Miyazaki tacitly poses the question and then leaves it a mystery. You can be certain only that her transformations are brilliantly suited to his fluid style of animation. So, too, are the film's many oozings and meltings: the dissolution of Howl into sticky puddles during a fit of self-pity, or the deliquescence of a haughty witch as she strains, sweating, up a palatial staircase, or the spreading through cracks of that same witch's servants, a horde of shadowy, threatening blobs. For a filmmaker who so meticulously realizes his fantasy worlds, in both image and sound, Miyazaki is uncommonly drawn to the

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mutable, and (beyond that) the amorphous.

This is one of the big differences between him and the computer animators. Even though the latter have given us the underwater world of *Finding Nemo* and the malleable Elastigirl of *The Incredibles*, the texture of their imagery refuses to flow. They're better at Ping-Pong balls than puddles; and just as they tend to make hard, shiny pictures, so too do they favor stories with clear-cut meanings.

Take *Madagascar*. This one you can comfortably show to a 5-year-old—and while you're at it, you may find its themes worth mulling over, even though they're acted out by talking animals that have escaped from the Central Park Zoo. The presenting issue of the animals' well-being—would they be happier in the wild?—gives way very quickly to an edgier question: Are New Yorkers too arrogant and parochial to survive outside their city? Much of the film's humor comes from poking fun at the showbiz pretensions of Alex the lion (voice of Ben Stiller), the neuroses of Melman the giraffe (voice of David Schwimmer) and the girl-from-the-block attitude of Gloria the hippo (voice of Jada Pinkett Smith). These traits, which the film presents as being appropriate enough in Manhattan, prove to be laughably useless once the animals are returned, unwillingly, to nature. (Only Marty the zebra wants to go back to the wild—a desire that he frames in Marcus Garvey terms, speaking with the voice of Chris Rock.) The twist in this theme—a good one—is that the manners of an effete civilization eventually win out. The New Yorkers have conviviality on their side.

The New Yorkers also know their movie culture, which provides *Madagascar* with its other major source of humor. Like other recent animated features, such as *Shrek 2* and *Shark Tale*, *Madagascar* abounds with joking allusions to pop films of the past, as well as evocations (by way of the drawings) of the voice actors' star personalities. These traits make *Madagascar* a fine example of the mass-media commodity: self-enclosed, self-promoting and self-referential. But is that any reason to hurl your Adorno at it? The movieness of *Madagascar* testifies only to its being the work of a studio rather than an author. This is normal, despite the emergence of a few famous animation directors, such as Brad Bird and Miyazaki. In fact, animated features are now the only films actually produced by studios, rather than financed and distributed by them; and for my money, they have become the only genre of big-studio releases that are consistently worth seeing.

That said, I should acknowledge that *Howl's Moving Castle* is the work not only of an author, Miyazaki, but of his Studio Ghibli; that its expert translation into English has been directed by Pete Docter of Pixar and Rick Dempsey of Disney; and that the cast of voice actors includes Jean Simmons, Lauren Bacall, Christian Bale, Emily Mortimer and Billy Crystal. It takes a village; just as *Madagascar*, produced by DreamWorks Animation SKG, required the writing and direction of two individuals, Eric Darnell and Tom McGrath, assisted by screenwriters Mark Burton and Billy Frolick.

Granted, one of the films is a consumer product, and the other is a wonder. But there's no need to choose between them. You can have both.

Israeli film, once among the most unwatchable of national cinemas, has undergone a striking improvement in recent years—paradoxically, and coincidentally, just as Israeli society has crumbled. One of the most remarkable of the pictures to emerge, Keren Yedaya's *Or (My Treasure)*, is now going into US theatrical release, having won the prize for best first feature a year ago at the Cannes festival.

It's easy to see why the jury liked Yedaya's work. She excels at the sort of distanced long takes, apparently casual in framing, held without camera movement, that have become the festival world's International Style. To this coolly rigorous form she adds hot and apparently spontaneous content: the fearless, selfless acting of Dana Ivgy as a high school girl in one of Tel Aviv's grubbier quarters and of Ronit Elkabetz as her mother, a prostitute of uncertain mental balance who goes in and out of hospitals. Over the course of the film, the girl works hard to save her mother; but since she lacks anyone who can help her save herself, in the end she rescues no one.

A wrenching, lower-depths story in which the most devastating turning points happen almost casually, as if in passing; a close-up study of contemporary social corruption, revealed without editorializing. (You may notice—although Yedaya does not draw your attention to the fact—that the johns are all foreign guest workers. The boyfriends, who amount to nonpaying johns, are all going to and from the army.) If the style of acting were deliberately artificial rather than naturalistic, if the camera roved rather than staying put, I would compare *Or* with Fassbinder's work.

So to hell with differences of style. *Or* is tough, direct and clear-headed. Fassbinder himself might have recognized the affinity, and grunted his approval.

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The sixteenth annual Human Rights Watch International Film Festival is about to begin, running at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater June 10–23, and once again I can tell you about only a fraction of the program. This year's series offers twenty-six films and videos, twenty-two of them New York premieres: shorts and features, documentaries and dramas, touching on the pressing, daily problems of people on five continents. With this much to write about, I'd better choose something exemplary—so let's make it *Videoletters*, for which the Dutch directors Katarina Rejger and Eric van den Broek will receive this year's Nestor Almendros Prize.

At its core, *Videoletters* is a twenty-episode television series, made between 1999 and 2004, in which Rejger and van den Broek helped people in the former Yugoslavia to re-establish contact with former friends, colleagues or neighbors from whom they were separated by war. The festival will show six of the episodes, each of which begins with someone setting up the video camera on an ironing board or dining-room table and starting to address the absent person. The speaker may be a young man in the Serbian Republic, tormented by his memories of the war, who hopes to hear from a half-Muslim friend who left the country; or a family in Belgrade may speak to the family in Zagreb with whom they used to vacation; or a Muslim woman may ask someone, anyone, from Visegrad to help her find the bones of her murdered children. Later in the episode, you will see the recipient watch the tape, talk about it and compose a reply. In some cases, the happier ones, you even see a reunion.

In writing about the cinema of the former Yugoslavia, my colleague (and former *Nation* intern) Vojislava Filipcevic has commented acidly on the filmmakers who convert suffering into spectacle for the excitement of Western European and American audiences. What's most remarkable about *Videoletters*, first of all, is that it has been done in the service of the people who suffer and is filmed, in large measure, from their viewpoint. Even more remarkable, the television series is part of a larger project in which Rejger and van den Broek have set up a website, telephone helplines, talk shows and even a caravan of buses equipped with Internet connections and webcams, so that more people throughout the former Yugoslavia can record and post videoletters. For information on how to applaud *Videoletters* at the festival, or for a program schedule: www.filmlinc.com or www.hrw.org/iff. ■

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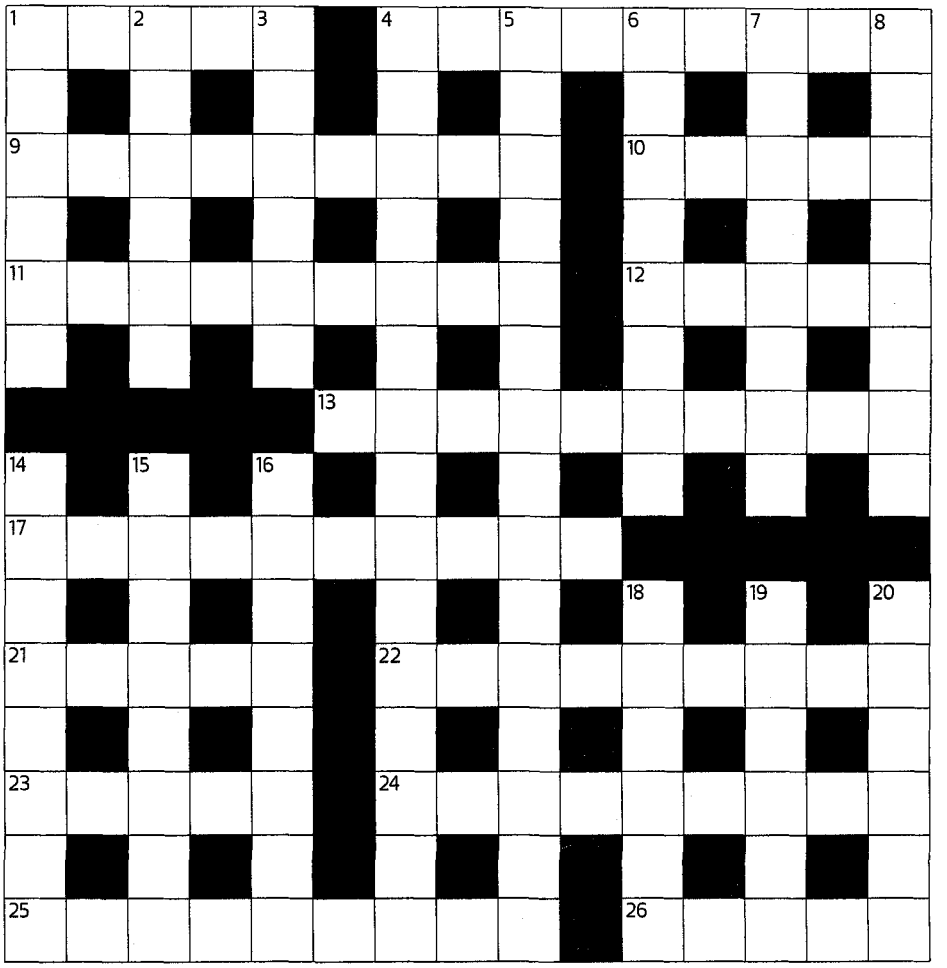
PUZZLE NO. 2992

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and **4** A little guy with nothing interesting to talk about has to steal something that puts out little bullets. (5-4,5)

9 With flowers, whether or not the ship is inside. (2,7)

10 With raised desks, thus a return is made to a medical degree here. (5)

11 Evidently a deal is in the offing, when a company makes a proposition like this. (4,5)

12 Stories that offer the least trouble shouldn't be told when not in an educational establishment, they say. (5)

13 A word of warning—the dirt is in front of the picture! (10)

17 What used to keep the dinosaurs going? It furnishes a lot of energy! (6,4)

21 What people have to have is seen to be wrong about the capital of Denmark. (5)

22 The remainder has a following inside, showing some holding back. (9)

23 What you are looking at right now with your children, perhaps. (5)

24 What pertains to our country is made in a camera, possibly. (9)

25 Love songs that can only be sung in the evening, by implication. (9)

26 Posed some question concerning a desk, sort of? (5)

DOWN

1 Very loud sort of kiss around it, but they hold only one or two people responsible for one of them. (6)

2 The color of the "loveliest village" to the French on a Scottish stream. (6)

3 What a bystander does is all right in a crazy person! (4,2)

4 Trying to impress one, you might put this—implying one of your understandings is better than the other. (4,4,7)

5 Ruth is evidently not with it! (15)

6 Concerning those on the stage, they put out a lot of energy! (8)

7 Describing Aesop's 12? Real cool nowadays! (8)

8 If you went all around the town, you'd see this as half of it. (4,4)

14 Sounds like these make sense in Berlin! (8)

15 Foolish people—not quite the sort that makes an evaluation. (8)

16 Did he make one rock in German fashion—at least theoretically? (8)

18 Is art OK? I, perhaps badly, put it to you, but it might get you moving overseas. (6)

19 A common greeting to John that implies taking ways. (6)

20 A style of hat, also nearby. (2,4)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

CORRECTION: As many alert puzzlers have pointed out, in Puzzle No. 2989, clue 20 down should have given Elgar, not Holst, as the composer of the Enigma Variations.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2991

J	O	H	N	B	R	O	W	N	S		B	O	D	Y
O		O		R		N		E		H		B		O
H	A	M	B	O	N	E		W	O	O	F	E	R	S
N		O		B		O		M		W		R		T
B	E	N	E	D	I	C	T	A	R	N	O	L	D	
U		Y		I		A		N		O		I		J
N	O	M	I	N	A	T	E		T	W	I	N	G	E
Y				G						B				T
O	F	F	E	N	D		O	P	E	R	A	H	A	T
N		L		A		P		R		O		A		I
	W	E	I	G	H	O	N	E	S	W	O	R	D	S
Y		E		I		N		V		N		D		O
A	R	C	H	A	I	C		A	U	C	T	I	O	N
R		E		N		H		I		O		L		E
D	A	D	A		H	O	L	L	O	W	E	Y	E	D

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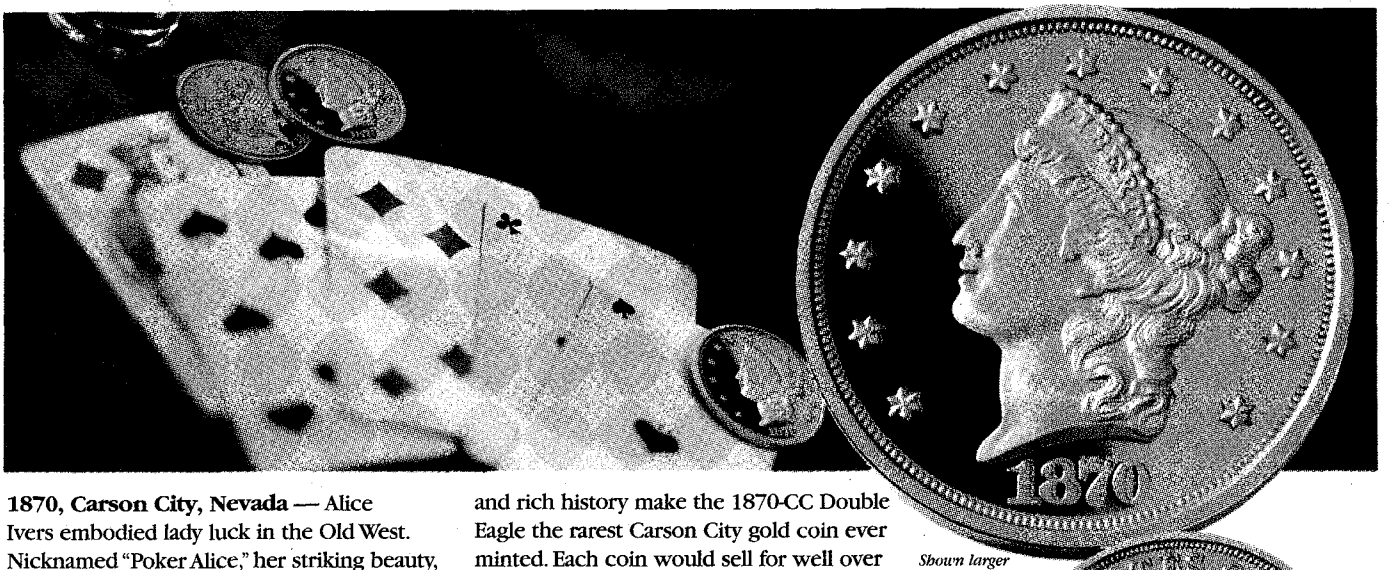
Prized Carson City Gold Double Eagle Won in High-Stakes Poker Showdown



Shown larger than actual size of 39 mm

Prized "CC" Mint Mark

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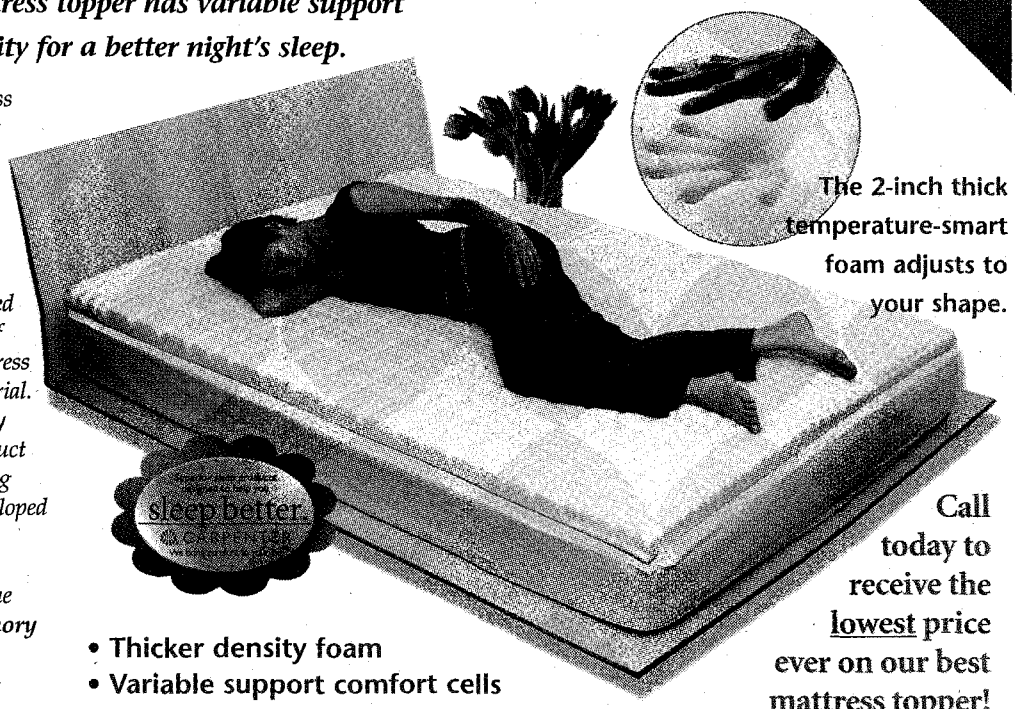

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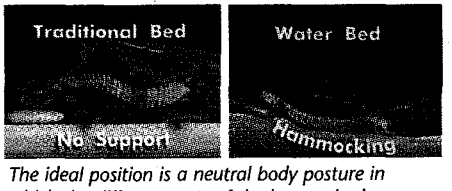
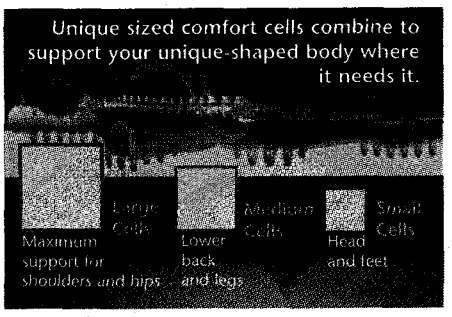
What could be wrong with your present bed?



The ideal position is a neutral body posture in which the different parts of the human body are supported individually and evenly. This is the secret behind Memory Foam Ultra, the mattress topper that turns any bed into the ideal sleep surface.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